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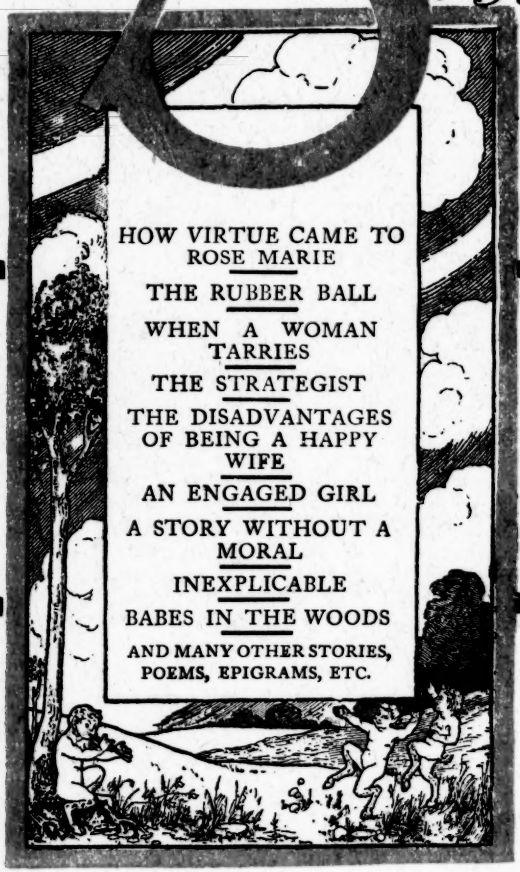
THE SMART SET

A Magazine of Cleverness

To Amuse, Not to Instruct



HOW VIRTUE CAME TO ROSE MARIE

THE RUBBER BALL

WHEN A WOMAN TARRIES

THE STRATEGIST

THE DISADVANTAGES OF BEING A HAPPY WIFE

AN ENGAGED GIRL

A STORY WITHOUT A MORAL

INEXPLICABLE

BABES IN THE WOODS

AND MANY OTHER STORIES, POEMS, EPIGRAMS, ETC.

COSMOPOLITAN LITERARY

SEPTEMBER 1919

1/3 NET

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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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Editor—J. W. MILNE

SEPTEMBER, 1919

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to which all editorial and advertising matter should be addressed.

What the *Daily Mail* said under "Queer Restaurants" in its issue of July 24th:

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The philosophies of these fragments are sometimes fruitful.

MAN, WOMAN, AND EXCESS.

By

H. DENNIS BRADLEY.

"THE ORIGINAL JAZZ"

To meet the many requests a reproduction of this Picture is now published in colour, 17×12 in., at **1s.**

MAN is a curious animal. Woman is an angel with curiosity.

A platitude and a tribute.

Men accept platitudes without question. Women question all things, even while they accept them.

I find it refreshing to deal in an occasional platitude . . . and hold a playful post-mortem.

The ordinary man loves a platitude with about as much intelligence as he loves a woman.

And once having accepted a platitude the ordinary man takes it to his bosom and believes in it with a religiosity beyond his comprehension.

But, alas, platitudes, with many other things he takes to his bosom, are occasionally as false as they are fair, and often blind his sober judgment and bear him wildly astray.

And nations and men deserve the government they get, in politics . . . and in love.

Only the few deserve the fair.

The ordinary man is worthy of the falsity of government but unworthy of the falsity of more beautiful things.

* * *

"What's in a name?"

Shakespeare perpetuated this fair and false platitude, and the ordinary man took it to his heart and cherished it.

But the bureaucrats and rulers are subtler. They realise the stupidity of the ordinary man. They know that to him *everything* is in a name.

Therefore it was their humour to call the "Tax on Trade and Enterprise" the "Excess Profit Tax."

But the Excess Profit Tax is killing Development and is the cause of Unemployment. And the thirst of the Bureaucracy is insatiable and its orgies of extravagance so insensate that the poor taxpayer can no longer afford to meet the bills.

So he gives it all up because development is of no use. The golden goose is dead and the simple business man will be as idle as the subtle brigands . . . if not so subtle.

* * * * *

In the dual intoxication of politics and sex I had almost forgotten to mention that Pope and Bradley continue to make clothes without charging plutocratic prices. The bureaucrats get most of the profit, but the guiding spirit of the House continues to live joyfully if not quite so well.

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INVITES the patronage of all who desire to retain pleasant memories of the Park meetings—or any other meeting in which they may be interested.

There are some who are prejudiced against the idea of receiving advice about racing—but why? If you know a friend in the City—one who is in intimate touch with the right people—do you not simply yearn to ask him to tell you what he knows? Of course you do, and just as the ordinary speculator or investor needs sound advice to guide him in his operations, so does he (or she) who takes a speculative interest in racing.

And why not have it? If you want advice on law, you go to a man of legal experience to get it; if you want advice on your health, you go to an expert for it, so why not seek the advice of an expert at racing? I have owned many winners, and I get to know the business intended by a good many stables, which knowledge, combined with experience and good judgment, and the fact that I spare no outlay and no trouble which will bring WINNERS, necessarily results in profit, both to myself and to those who patronise me.

Now, the first thing to remember is this—It is of no use backing horses every day just for the sake of having a bet. The only sure way to success is to *wait*, to wait until something really reliable comes along, and that is my part of the business, and I observe it strictly. I cannot and *will not* wire every day.

Another thing is, to unalterably confine your operations to *One horse*, and never more under any circumstances whatever. Then, by following these occasional items of genuine information, strictly one horse, you can absolutely rely on beating your bookmaker, and I want you to accept my help, for I know that I can win money for you regularly.

If you are attending any meeting, or if you are staying at home and desire to take a speculative interest in any race-meetings, you cannot do better than patronise me, for I have the best men on the Turf working for me, I employ men who attend every meeting and travel the training quarters, ever on the search for winners, and I am confident that the profit of the season 1919 will surpass even that of past years. I lay no claim to infallibility, but I DO claim experience and judgment, which MUST be beneficial to my followers.

I supply the information each day that I advise anything to be done, my terms being the odds to two sovereigns each winner. Add £2 to your stake every time, and the profit of that £2 (as paid to you by your bookmaker) is what you pay me for each win, as my fee for the advice. Don't run away with the idea that the information is dear, for it is nothing of the sort. It is not what you pay for WINS that counts against you, but what you pay your bookmaker for losers, and you will win oftener than you will lose if you follow me. Moreover, the information will really cost you very little, if you add my fee to your own stake every time, as the only out-of-pocket cost to you is when the information loses, which is not often.

Intending followers must send four stamped and addressed forms (or their cost), with clear instructions for me to follow, and settle promptly for winners as due. No commissions are executed, but I can wire direct to the Agents of those who cannot personally attend to wires.

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Signed .....

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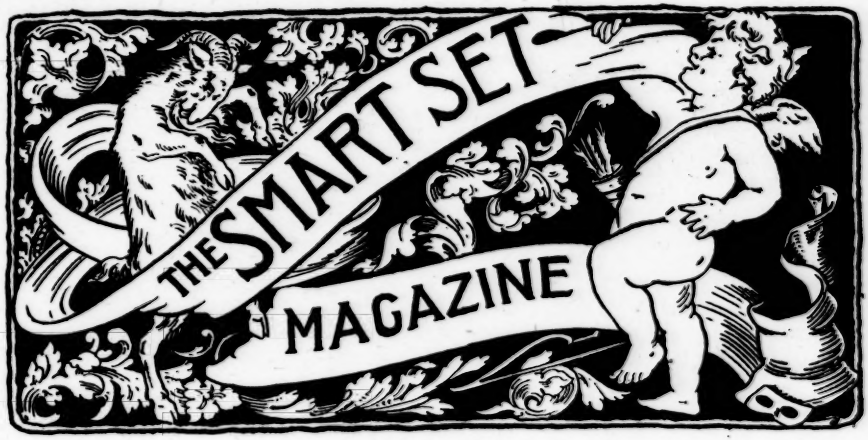

REBELS

By M. A. Brooks

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I

THE gods of the valley slipped down from their altar after the bronze doors had clanged shut behind the last of the worshippers and filed slowly out into the ante-room of the temple.

The youngest god, dawdling purposely, waited until the sound of their sandals slapping and shuffling on the smooth, worn stones as they washed the incense from their hands and hung up their haloes and robes in their lockers, had died away down the corridors. Angry tears in his eyes made a blinding blur of the sun-filled doorway leading from the ante-room into the flower-hung corridor and thence into the garden where the others were gathering to finish the game of quoits which the afternoon service had interrupted.

With hands held clenched at his sides, he walked fiercely out among them.

"I'm through with you!" he choked. "I saw you in there laughing and sneering at those poor people. I've seen you do it before. You aren't even human and I hate you. I'm going away."

He glared at them, rubbed the tears from his eyes and, as they stared, vaulted the white stone garden wall.

II

THE sound of heavy snoring was the first thing that struck upon the ears of Carol Carter as she opened the door of her apartment.

Her eyes darted worriedly about the room until they discovered the unconscious figure of her husband sprawled in a drunken crimson-faced stupor upon a couch. She walked toward him. A nausea almost overcame her, but she bent over him, clutched his shoulder firmly and shook him awake.

"I'm through with you!" she choked, shivering with aversion. "I can't stand seeing you like this again. I'm going to go away and leave you right now. Do you understand?"

He gave a troubled grunt and sank back to sleep. She put her hand over her quivering lips and turned away.

"How I hate him," she thought. "And once I thought he was a god!"

THE RIDERS

By Mary Carolyn Davies

LIFE is on a swift horse, and Youth is on a fleet,
Beauty rides with spur and whip, and nothing stays,
Snatch my hand, and pull me close, and make them beat,
Your heart and my heart, a few small days!

Let the quarrels go now, the explaining word;
Let the treasured griefs drop down like sand.
What are our best toys, when their hoofs are heard?
Put the words behind us, and touch my hand.

Mighty are the steeds and swift, wild the steeds that bear
The Three on the highroad where the great stones fly.
If your face hide at my neck, my eyes hide in your hair,
We shall never know, then, Who has ridden by!

WOMEN are interested in a roué for the same reason that they are attracted to a child. Each is a creature of their own creation.

A SWEETHEART is a bottle of wine; a wife is a wine-bottle.

HOW VIRTUE CAME TO ROSE MARIE

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By E. B. Dewing

CHAPTER I

VIRTUE never comes. It goes like the dying, into that bourne from which no traveller returns. It can no more be pressed back to its old form than can the butterfly be re-enfolded in the broken cocoon.

But Rose Marie didn't know this. It would have been for her the merest theory, and she was never concerned with theory—never, in all her life. There were certain practical problems which she had to meet, even at the first. Particularly at the first. Keeping warm and fed, for instance, and out of the reach of the hard fist of her drunken father.

When her father wasn't drunk he did teaming for a local express company. When her mother wasn't bringing into an overcrowded world another child she took in washing.

Rose Marie was among the eldest, and her mother had chosen her name from a verse on a grocery store calendar. It was a beautiful name, everyone thought, and among the earliest things Rose Marie learned was to read it and to write it. But the hours of her schooling were all too brief. For she couldn't go to school when she didn't have shoes to wear there, and in her family there were not enough shoes. Shoes were lent and fought over.

In the summer this didn't matter much, because the second generation of Davises could play, barefooted, in the patch of grass and dirt which served as a front yard. To this day, beneath the web-like silk of her stocking, the firm, shining satin of her slipper, Rose Marie carries a scar from having stepped upon a broken bottle. But in the winter, all sprawled and tossing in the unprepossessing main room that was kitchen, living-room and laundry, all wet from the slopping water of the tubs and dry from the great glowing stove, it wasn't so agreeable to be unable to get away from hearth and home.

And then, in the unexplored depths of Rose Marie's not clever but somehow acquisitive brain was formulated a plan. This ability was one of the ways in which she was different from her brothers and sisters. They, too, might have been impatient with their lot if they'd known they had one, but their impatience would have been—would have resulted in—at best, but a vague, quarrelsome discontent; hers could be translated into terms of action.

And yet her plan wasn't action, really. It was a matter of waiting for a circumstance which never had occurred, and she had no sufficient reason for supposing ever would occur. She waited during two years of Saturday nights for her father's wages to be brought home intact. And at the end of the two years her waiting was rewarded, and she rose in the middle of the night and stole them from his pocket.

She ran away, and after that, of course, she was afraid to come back. When their first shock of surprised anger was over—the morning made

hideous by curses and imprecations—her family decided her loss was cheap enough. She hadn't worked, save intermittently, had never been much help with the washing or given any very tender care to the younger children.

She had enough money to take her to the nearest city, a western town of some hundred thousand inhabitants.

She found a lodging for the night, making a blind but lucky choice, and the next day obtained work in a button factory, by answering an advertisement in the want column of a paper.

She had been there for what seemed an æon of time, one of a frowsy crew among whom she was easily capable of holding her own, when she attracted the attention of the superintendent. She was different from her fellow workers, just as she had been different from her brothers and sisters.

She had about her—something in her brow, her eyes—a suggestion of power. She never stooped over her work, her hair was as alive and as splendid at the end of the day as it was at the beginning, her fingers were very nimble with the skill and the nimbleness of any perfectly put together machine.

The superintendent spoke to her once or twice and then, by seeming accident, separated her from the others long enough to make an appointment to meet her outside of factory hours.

Rose Marie took her first complete bath. She mended her old clothes and with what little money she had saved bought a few new ones. That night, in the dark hall of the cheap lodging-house where she still had a share in a room, when the superintendent held her—briefly—in his arms, he might have been embracing any other woman, a woman not nearly so new to the amenities of the world.

The superintendent was rather a commonplace man of something past thirty-five, with a family of whom he had secretly tired and an income a little more than sufficient for their needs. This slight surplus he was glad to spend on Rose Marie, and in addition he gave her work in the office of the factory instead of in the actual manufacture of the commodity.

She accepted the situation in full. It was one for which she had bided her time and rejected other possibilities less advantageous. Now her material wants were agreeably met, the bath became a habit, her fingers no less nimble but more ornamental.

No one knew—definitely—of her affair with the superintendent, he took good care they shouldn't, and she was not of a loose-tongued disposition. She liked the work in the office, she learned to file papers and use a typewriter and many things less precise. But no office could have held her. Much to the astonishment of the superintendent, she left both him and his button factory quite unceremoniously.

She decided to go upon the stage. She arrived at this decision without knowing anything about the stage, or how hard it was to get a start there and how hard to rise. She had no thought for the tribulations of a theatrical career.

Quite simply she made her decision, and as an extraordinary binding of this bargain with herself she joined a burlesque show in the lower part of town. She was engaged wholly upon her looks. She could neither dance nor sing, her speaking voice was impossible, she had no natural sense of how to read her lines.

There were many things about the stage she didn't like. She didn't like appearing before the footlights in the lack of clothing prescribed. It took her a long while to outgrow this distaste, and even then it would come over her afresh when she was tired or depressed.

But that wasn't all. Instead of being concealed, as in the button factory, a lack of morals was taken for granted in the burlesque show. If you had any character you were a suspicious one.

The stage director was a down-at-heels Englishman who had seen better days in London. He drank to an extent, and was thought—though not proved—to be a drug addict. But he had an eye for colour, for decoration, in

fact knew much a director of just that sort of show isn't supposed to know. He even knew something of singing and dancing, and he became interested in Rose Marie and taught her the rudiments of these neglected arts.

His interest wasn't exactly the same interest felt by the superintendent. To him she had been a handsome, quiet girl who appealed to him in a way and gave him little trouble. She gave the stage director a great deal of trouble—he took a great deal about her—he found her anything but quiet and rather more than handsome, and in that particular way she didn't very greatly appeal to him.

But she had a sort of fancy for him and he never thwarted fancies. In this case it afforded him the opportunity to watch over her almost tenderly and save her from a great deal that might have been destructive. He extended her a helping, not a hindering hand. He was seedy to the point of shoddiness, his indubitable talents had been swallowed by his weaknesses, and yet, in comparison with the man she had known before and the men she knew after—immediately after—he had qualities.

When, thanks to him, she became one of the lesser principals in the current offering it was one of the very rare occasions in her whole life when there stirred within her the emotion of gratitude. She was often far less grateful for far more.

He designed her a black dress trimmed with silver crescent moons, a crescent moon in her hair. It was little enough to design for her, but considering its excessive limitations it had distinction, and for the rest it was for her to provide the distinction. She had a sentimental song to sing, or rather to recite—she never had a singing voice—the stage was dark, the spotlight trained on her, and then the other girls came in and joined in the chorus.

It wasn't any great triumph, the only thing which really got across the footlights was Rose Marie's beauty and a kind of fine scorn she had. And the audience neither understood her beauty nor believed in her scorn.

This was in a measure her own fault—she made no concessions. If she had she might never have reached the point where concessions didn't matter. The importance of her opportunity lay in its immediate value to her—what she was able to learn from it. It gave her, as it were, a place of departure.

That night, she and the Englishman talked till late at the little café where he always took her, and till still later at their chronically disordered abiding-place. The Englishman always called it the crumpled room:

"This is the man, all tattered and torn,
That kissed the maiden all forlorn
That milked the cow with the crumpled horn—"

"Silly!" she said.

She found him unbelievably silly—nursery rhymes had had no part in her education—and at the same time infinitely superior. She was baffled and a little hurt by the superiority, and yet hungrily grasped what she could of it.

"You're not tattered and torn—"

"No, I always keep a tu'penny bit this side of being Lord Mayor of London."

She didn't ask him what he meant.

The things she could learn from him were more definite, like his speech—which, when she thought of it, she grew to imitate fairly well, having a reasonable gift of mimicry—and his use of knife and fork, and a smoothness of manner which he had—less definite perhaps.

Her fancy for him, however, was a thing apart from any sense of benefit. If it were but a fancy, it was an honest one, and not to be confused—save in the happy result—with other happenings seemingly like it. He was for her mysterious—almost wonderful—he gave her a glimpse, if not of heaven, at least of an eminence dizzy enough and breath-taking enough to make the ordinary human relation seem pit-like. But it didn't make her lose her balance. She had no intention of remaining for ever in the burlesque show, not even for what she thought was love. And the

object of her affections appeared less wonderstruck than anyone when she failed to report on a certain Monday.

Of course he had known it for a few hours more than the rest of them; the fact that he gave no warning, made no practical and helpful use of his advance information, showed how much he really thought of Rose Marie.

There was no farewell—merely an expressman for belongings which the Englishman noticed were ready. Later an address was sent to the theatre for the forwarding of strictly theatrical baggage. One has a last glimpse of the down-at-heels one, a trifle more down at heels than usual, his weaknesses blazing out all over him, and scrupulously attending to Rose Marie's scrawled behests.

She had had a most successful interview with the manager of a road company which had been playing for half a week in the city of her adoption. He had seen her and sent for her, and her final break with the burlesque being accomplished in an unostentatious manner was in part his suggestion. It was easier, too, than giving bothersome explanations. And then Rose Marie had a large way of despising anything which might pass for apology.

CHAPTER II

At twenty she was a woman, not a child, a woman by right of most of the experiences of womanhood and a number most women are satisfied without. A woman physically, certainly. She had flowered like a whole garden of the blossoms from which she took her name, and the manager of the road show came very near to allowing himself to become a fool over her. If he hadn't already had a wife, her career at this point might have been complicated by marriage. And a marriage like that would have been almost as great a pity as though she had accepted the magnanimous offer of a prosperous merchant who was so infatuated with her that he followed her—neglecting his merchandizing shamefully—wherever the show played.

It was a musical piece, and she was by far the handsomest of eight tall and haughty ladies who wore elaborate gowns—not tights any more, except for a moment in the final act just to prove they could—and were, alternately, guests and hostesses, and in the big second act setting patrons of Mme. Fifi's millinery establishment.

The piece was booked for some of the larger cities, stopping for several weeks, and Rose Marie's learning went on apace. She learned how to smile at a head waiter, be graceful in a taxi cab, disarm the well-founded suspicions of a hotel clerk. Her necessities had long ago been supplied, she began to class with these the more obvious luxuries of the barbarian. She might have had a tendency to eat too much, having for many years gone hungry, but was warned in time by a slight increase in her already perfect weight, or drink too much—but of this she was even more wary, with the example of her father before her. She kept her naturally quick temper under fair control, and by nature hating labour, became known at the theatre for her application and her reliability.

She made no pretence to other virtues. She accepted the advantages which came her way, and also the day of their reckoning. The fact that she didn't think very much saved her from injury—she remained in a sense untouched. She scorned the supplicating humanity she knew. She flung her favours, rather than offered them, and took as her right a good deal her less fortunate sisters might labour for in vain. It was surely the way to deal with favours—the way she dealt.

And as for the favours she herself received, they at least enabled her to be generous. Perhaps she was always that. But specifically generous. She used to send her mother anonymous gifts of money. Whenever her admirers gave her jewels—not magnificent necklaces and gorgeous rings, no one gave Rose Marie anything like these,

but the plainer, smaller remembrances to be made of precious metals—it was her habit to wait until the company made its next jump and then pawn the things, applying the proceeds as above mentioned. There were always more where those came from—or somewhere else. Her success was only bounded by her opportunity. And no one knew it better than the manager.

The show she was in was only one of three he had out, and on her account he favoured it with an undue share of his time and attention. She was worth any man's watching. She reduced her seven companions to a total insignificance. She learned something more about dancing and singing and again she had a song to herself. She was scornful, but hardly proud.

In the final act, where she came down to the footlights, representative of a nation, a state or a century—it mattered little which—threw back her enveloping cloak, turning slowly, she was scornful rather than proud of the gaping appreciation she evoked. The fat comedian stepped forward and said, "You are glorious, my dear, glorious!" —he had a different compliment and comment for each—and then her line was, "It's a glorious nation (or state or century)"; but one night she gave instead, "Am I? I feel like a fish."

If the applause had not been so hearty she might have been taken to task. As it was, it gave her a reputation for wit —quite undeserved—for she really had no sense of comic values whatever.

She had over the rest of the world a kind of physical ascendancy.

Beside her, her companions looked like badly bred live-stock trigged out with oil and ribbons at a country fair. They were all either too thick or too thin, lumpish, spineless, never prize-winning. The daughter of a teamster and a washerwoman had at once a largeness and a fineness, a delicacy and a strength. In later years a woman artist, stumbling through the haze and steam of a Turkish bath, came upon Rose Marie reclined on a marble slab and thought herself magically transported to the Metropolitan Museum's department of Greek sculptures. To say her looks were not the greatest asset she possessed would be to be too highly prejudiced in her favour.

She remained with the road show two seasons, going as far as the coast, but not east. The manager was clever enough to keep her away from New York, where he had both a premonition and a very experienced opinion that he would lose her. But if he had understood her better, he would have realized that losing her was in any case only a question of time.

The fact was, she came to the same point with him and with his company and with the chances he had it in his gift to offer her, that she had already arrived at and passed through with her home, the button factory and the burlesque show. She again outgrew her surroundings.

It would be interesting, as well as futile, to speculate upon just what might have been her next step if Flimmerhouse hadn't found her out when he did. She might have come to New York on her own responsibility—continued her learning along lines less resistant than those he selected.

But at any rate, when he did find her she was all waiting and ready to be found. With his usual skill or luck or whatever you care to call his unerring instinct, Flimmerhouse made use of the very moment when Rose Marie was most suitable for his moulding hand.

CHAPTER III

FLIMMERHOUSE was always poking about in unexpected places. The artist soul of him rebelled—almost periodically—at environments and tasks which were none the less irksome for being the rewards of his own genius. There are legends of great Arab princes who disappear from the condition of their state to wander among beggars, and—for all he knew—Flimmerhouse might have been descended from one of these. And as they would have had the best of

reasons for their conduct—the need of mingling intimately with their subjects—so he had the convenient convincing excuse of a search for obscure talent.

His journeys were quite strictly those of discovery. His theatres—his beautiful, unapproachable theatres—were, popular tradition had it, fed from sources of the utmost obscurity. He preferred to train with his own clever hands the material he used; he never took it, ready made, from others.

It was said his actors were his puppets as completely as though he were the Italian master of a Punch and Judy. But at least he picked them with a care amounting to something like divination.

It must have been this intenser discernment which was at the back of his immediate faith in Rose Marie. He recognized her at once for what she might become.

It was in a small city, nearer New York than the manager had quite intended. The curtain went up on the usual opening chorus, lines of girls, a few ratty youths in white flannels, a great deal of blaring sound. But this finally gave way to a passage, at once explanatory and comic, between the second comedian and the ingénue, and then the octet which Rose Marie led glided in and ranged themselves in attitudes of grace about the terrace of the Grand Hotel.

Flimmerhouse's course—his wanderings and his explorations—had a rare moment of entire justification. But he wasn't wandering then. He had the gift of remaining absolutely still, like an image. His emotions were mirrored, not in the customary awkward stirrings and gestures, but as if they were lights back of his remarkably translucent visage.

At varying instigations the whole fibre of the man would seem to change, and it was one of these changes which came over him at sight of Rose Marie. A little before the end of the act he sent in his card to the manager, who didn't dare refuse him the introduction he sought.

Word came that she was wanted just as Rose Marie was being hooked into her gown by the girl whose place was next hers in the dressing-room. No details were supplied—there may have been a trace of malice-aforethought in the lack—so it was without the slightest preparation for the cataclysmic nature of her going that she threw a scarf across her exceedingly bare shoulders and stepped out, questioning and a little irritated. And there was Flimmerhouse talking with the manager in a desultory sort of way.

He removed his hat and his cigar when he saw her, so she looked at him more closely than she otherwise would have done and recognized him from his photographs.

Most girls would immediately have lost whatever veneer of poise they had been able to acquire—smirked and fidgeted, in fact shown up as badly as possible. But she had a serenity, a firmness.

She gave no sign of recognition, but waited, prettily expectant, and when the magic name was murmured—none too graciously, considering the tongueful it was—it might have been the merest incident in an already incidental life to be sought by one whom far greater than she would cheerfully have followed, for benefits to come, into any distance or danger he might suggest.

"I want to talk to you," said Flimmerhouse.

"Now?"

"No. Finish the show to-night. Come to my office in New York to-morrow. You can easily make it by three o'clock."

He had written something on a card which he gave into her hand.

She glanced questioningly at the manager, who was trying to smile.

He succeeded remarkably. "Mr. Flimmerhouse says he knows I wouldn't stand in your way, and he expects to make right any loss or inconvenience. The fact is"—the smile was now a marked failure save as a grimace—"the fact is, he knows I couldn't, even if I wanted to—not in a case like this. I most heartily congratulate you—I do

indeed—and I guarantee you'll make good in your new—your new—"

It was in words a handsome speech, but the others were only waiting for an approach to its end.

"You have something for me?"

"We'll see about that to-morrow. Now you must go and I must go—I must get a train. Good-bye. Be careful to-morrow in crossing Broadway. I should hate to think of anyone as beautiful as you are being injured."

Flimmerhouse had a trick—rarely used except by women—of turning on or off a kind of animal magnetism, apparently at will.

Rose Marie stared at his rapidly retreating back.

She thought he walked as she would have liked to have danced. Dancing was the only term of comparison she had for him. She might have realized him more articulately had there been others, but he was new to her absolutely. She'd never seen, consciously, either a poet or a pirate, a barbaric mask or a piece of fine porcelain, therefore she couldn't describe him to herself with any such wealth of suitable and suggestive terms, but dancing she knew.

She wondered why a creature like that should call her beautiful. Of course he might have been in jest. Perhaps he never made jests. She was strangely occupied with this personal side of Flimmerhouse, considering the door he was holding open for her.

The manager had stopped smiling now and turned on his heel. He couldn't trust himself to speak. But Rose Marie finished his show for him, as Flimmerhouse had said. Then she went straight to her room and started to pack, at which congenial occupation the disthroned one found her.

It was easier to let him in than not to do so, and she was so preoccupied with other matters that she chose the easier course. If she had fully understood the future, and what the future held and didn't hold, she might have paid him more attention.

CHAPTER IV

THOUGH she had come fairly near to the tender passion with the down-at-heels Englishman, Rose Marie had never been in love. And in love a miss is almost as good as a mile. The superintendent of the button factory she merely tolerated for obvious motives, and the manager of the road show she very positively disliked, though she was clever enough about not letting him see it.

For the rest, her experiences were so exceedingly casual that love was not in question. There had been a boy in the road show—until he lost his job—with whom she had rather played at love. He gratified her desire for ownership, she could be honest and careless and profane in his company, and she had nothing to gain from him and everything to lose.

But love—love that is of the flesh and mind and spirit, in which all three are welded, which has a growing living entity of its own, rising and falling, gaining and losing, a thing of tears, laughter, exaltation, depths—this she had never known, had never even known its need. And it didn't come to her for several days, until after several long extraordinary interviews, that she was in love with Flimmerhouse.

When it did it seemed to her such a funny thing for her to be, such a kind of presumptuous, reckless thing, that she burst out laughing in the middle of the street and a passing man thought she was a little drunk and spoke to her. She told him, however, to mind his own business, and something in her tone was convincing.

A few months after that no one would ever have made the mistake of thinking her drunk. She shed all traces of her early self as completely as a snake sheds its skin.

Rose Marie Davis, protégée of Flimmerhouse, was no more the girl of the road show than the girl of the road show was the abused, barefoot child of the teamster's household. No more and no less. There was only the merest

thread of character, which runs through even the most varied progress.

She proved an earnest student of the art of acting. In any work she had a directness of attack her lack of general education only served to emphasize. She split no hairs. She gathered no flowers by the wayside.

But Flimmerhouse would have allowed little time for flower-gathering. And it was the only return she was able to make to him for all he did—for her lessons, her apartment, her maid, her clothes, and actual money in her hand—that she should give him, in the way he wanted, her best, her closest attention. But accustomed as she was to more tangible payments even her best seemed little enough—barely honest. He explained it to her over and over—how it was his method of dealing in futures—how, in his opinion, she had a future which she now mortgaged to him for what he intended to make of it.

"You mean you're going to make me a star—a great actress?"

"My dear child, I never said I was going to make you a great actress. But a star—if you do exactly as I say—"

"I'll always do as you say, Mr. Flimmerhouse. But you're too good to me—I feel I ought not to take it from you—"

"Oh, well, it won't be long now before you'll have a little part—a character bit that won't be too difficult. I mean you won't have to sustain a human mood farther than you're able—hold on too long—"

"Hold on? But you are—you're too good."

Their talks often got away from her like this. She would have been easier in an atmosphere where the personal side was more intrusive.

It became increasingly apparent that her great man's interest was purely professional. He didn't seem to care in any personal sense at all. And it evidently wasn't that he didn't admire her. It wasn't that he didn't praise her. She was exceeding, he assured her, his fondest hopes—and with the assurance he smiled at her as he might have smiled, she thought, at a wax dummy in a window.

It was extraordinary that any man should so stoop to analyze the problems of a woman, and yet remain abstract. She was disturbed by the realization that she wasn't good enough for him—worth while enough—not even bad enough perhaps—but nothing—utterly beneath his notice. Then he shouldn't have noticed her at all—should have left her to the mercies of an encroaching fate. She wasn't nearly as grateful to him as she would have been if she hadn't loved him. All he did for her went small in comparison with what he didn't do.

At first, of course, in spite of her feeling of presumption, she had expected, gloriously, that he wanted of her what everyone else had wanted, and her love for him was flecked with moments of anger because her expectations went unmet.

Anger at him and a bitter contempt for the thing that she was that Flimmerhouse did not want. She tried many times to stir him, but all her little arts and snares seemed so ineffably cheap, so inadequate to the situation. It would have been far easier if she hadn't cared so much. She might have taken a chance then, either of victory or loss.

And beside this handicap of caring, she knew it was with his help that she was making her way along a difficult road. She had no wish to lose that, either. It was as if, no matter where she turned, she was weighted with her responsibilities.

Her beauty, never coarse, underwent a further process of refinement. Not a deadening, an intenser life, rather. Her hazel eyes were like stained sunlight, her hair—combining brown and gold—took on a look of fusing metals. She had always walked as a reigning empress might, but now there was something added—it was as if she made her way through trailing clouds. She began to receive a quality of homage new in even her varied experience.

But general admiration meant little to her. She lived only for the approval

of Flimmerhouse. Everything she did, everything she thought, everything she was, she judged by his standards rather than her own. To the religious, God is omniscient, omnipotent and ever-present. Supplant God by Flimmerhouse, and you have his hold. His image was constantly before her—would have made of any lesser image an intruder.

She had no background and no inheritance not actively wrong, she had been quite suddenly uprooted from habits of life for which she really had but slight distaste, she lived now in a state of nervous excitations brought about both by her unsatisfied passion and the character of her work; and yet by the most conventional standards her present life could have been judged blameless.

It was something more than the power of love which saved her, it was a power—a transformation—within herself. She was for ever discovering depths and distances that were like the opening of long-locked rooms. She was afraid of destroying this new country of her nature. She didn't think of it in terms of fear—she didn't think at all, her processes being emotional rather than mental—but her dread of a prospective loss acted automatically like a brake. She looked at men—even at some of the men she used to know when they happened, as they sometimes did, to cross her path—she looked at them with a sort of surprised coldness.

Even these last meant less than nothing to her—even her memories of them were vague and blurred. She attained the reputation of being absolutely true to Flimmerhouse.

CHAPTER V

Mary Davis—plain Mary Davis was what she had become—did very well with the bit he found for her in one of his new productions. But no one could have told from seeing her in it that she was either young or handsome. This secret was well hidden beneath skilfully applied shadows and awkward clothes. She was an old Irishwoman, and had upon the stage five minutes of rage. It was just that—a long curse—but mild enough compared with the rage she managed to stifle within herself when Flimmerhouse gave her the part.

The "bit" had long been talked of, and she expected an opportunity to wear a magnificent gown at a dinner party—smoke a cigarette gracefully.

But after a few weeks of the other she knew that Flimmerhouse had been right. She had to get away from the fact of her past—the fact that she had ever been a show girl—time enough for youth and beauty when this distance was fully established. The part was hardly her creation; she had been trained and coached to the last inch, but after weeks she somehow felt that it became so. The rage at least she made her own.

That rage, night after night, was an outlet for all the dissatisfactions of her soul and body. It left her limp, relaxed all the hard gathered nerves, enabled her to go on with her existence. It had come to her just in time, though she didn't know it. Flimmerhouse might have suspected it, however. He might have suspected a good deal about Rose Marie of which he appeared—always—to be totally unaware.

Her next rôle was still character, so called, but not so old and of wider compass—a woman of forty, and with a past at least one-half as lurid as Rose Marie's own. It was wonderful how they were able to make that fresh glory appear but the remnants of a youth gone by. A smouldering woman—and the young actress discovered that she herself did smoulder. For again, in spite of outside care, the thing she portrayed became a part of herself, and her own nature seemed to expand to it almost as directly as a glove finger might be pulled wide by a glove-stretcher.

It wasn't that what she played was bigger or more important than she was herself; but any part, she found, had angles and protuberances which had to be accommodated. She did her best with them—as always—and all without any very conscious or deliberate effort.

Of course for this particular portrayal she had advantages—she was by nature quite overwhelmingly suited to it—though this last it might have taken a Flimmerhouse to suspect. In that moment at the end, a moment so frankly melodramatic that only a Flimmerhouse would have dared it in the midst of serious and modern drama—that moment when she swayed and fell and lay full length for her enemies to triumph, she so much more than met spectacular requirements.

If Flimmerhouse had not thought it premature, she could have had both a popular and a critical acclaim much earlier than she did have them. But she had to wait, still piling up her preparation. It was as if, despite her striving—even her measure of success—she were forced to live in a world where reward was constantly around the corner.

She had curious dreams in which she stood behind bars, Flimmerhouse on the other side, holding—just beyond reach—desirable food and apparel and indeterminate bright objects. And there were other dreams where she seemed to have shed her humanity to become a poodle in an animal act, Flimmerhouse the trainer, and she begging and dancing about for dainties held aloft. The audience was wild in its applause.

But all this was grossly unfair to Flimmerhouse—it only showed what contrary phenomena dreams are. He did for her so much. And in their personal relation he grew to a charming friendliness, treated her with a kind of punctilious courtesy rare enough. But her love for him was as hopeless as ever.

At first the solution had seemed so natural—so easy of achievement.

Every time she entered her little apartment it was as though a ghostly Flimmerhouse entered with her. Why shouldn't he be there? It was his—he was paying for it—and in so far as she could discover he had no ties to prevent his full freedom.

And as for any virtue—any scruple—if you only listened to half the stories you heard, if you only looked at the man himself. . . . Why, you might as well have accused Solomon of being monastic! He gave no effect of grossness—it wasn't that which took him so far from any native sanctity—but you felt his refinements were epicurean rather than holy.

His principles, his doctrines, were as indefinite as his extraction, which was very indefinite indeed—this matter of race being less understood in man than cattle. Though, as for that, even the lower animals have to begin somewhere.

Yes, at first the solution had appeared very simple, but as time progressed—carrying with it the changes that time does carry—the simplicity was clouded. Her existence, without him, seemed less like a gaping void. In one sense she wasn't without him—so little without him that there almost might have been performed some skilful transfusing operation by which the fluid of his brain had enlivened hers.

It was just because he was so close, perhaps, that any closer bond between them was at times unthinkable, and held a promise and a possibility of bondage only comparable to the chain of union connecting those celebrated twins from Siam. And much as she would have welcomed any approach, her season of singleness had formed a sort of frame around her—a frame from which she would at last have had to be forcibly cut, as the canvas of a picture is cut by a thief.

As time went on, her thought of Flimmerhouse, her longing and her visions, grew to a poignancy like the sharp beauty of a rift in clouds—as distant and yet as blinding.

One of the things wrong with her was that she was lonely. Never gregarious, she had nevertheless been accustomed to a continual humming companionship—hardly a minute really alone—and in the rarefied atmosphere in which Flimmerhouse had folded her this was replaced by privacies hitherto undreamt. Even at the theatre she had a dressing-room of her own, a place wonderfully self-contained in all its

furnishings of convenience—it even had a door that locked.

She was everywhere tactfully shown the way, taught, given the benefit of an experience riper than her own. Everyone was infinitely patient with her stupidities and kind at her capacities, but she was in need of something more than mere appreciation. And she might have found her need—friendship or anything else—if it hadn't been for Flimmerhouse, who was always ready, if more or less invisibly, to interpose his own gracefully attenuated presence between his protégée and the blasting influences of the vulgar.

It was as though he held a cup to her lips and forced her to drink the full bitter draught, the assumption being if she didn't yield to his force she wasn't worth his pains. And she accepted—as she always accepted—his terms.

Not even her worst enemy, and she had enemies, both now and in her more flamboyant period, could have accused her of being a weakling. It was proof enough she wasn't weak, the fact that she hadn't perished, the fact that now, with much of her youth still ahead, she had left so many milestones behind her.

CHAPTER VI

It wasn't the speed of her advance which was remarkable. There was nothing to make Flimmerhouse or anyone else dizzy in the deliberate manner of her course.

As Flimmerhouse watched her he was reminded, rather, of a wave rolling in towards shore, or perhaps the ebb and flow of the tides—controlled, he had heard, by the moon? Was he the moon? No, decidedly no. And yet she couldn't have been more his . . .

She thought he didn't love her. But he did love her. He loved her during those early years as an artist loves his own creation—loves and hates it as he might love and hate himself.

What would she have become without him? The chances would have been all against her—they had been against her as it was. His had been the eye to recognize—a fact giving her rather more claim on him than his on her—his, also, the hand to withhold.

He knew that as well as she did. He knew where he had seemed to fail her. But had he failed her?

As a potter relentlessly thrusts his delicately moulded clay into the firing furnace, trusting both flame and substance, so Flimmerhouse could have been accused of being unrelenting in keeping away from Rose Marie the cooling, blessed air of human contacts.

He had denied her, not only the one thing, but everything—he knew it as well as she did. But if she were lonely she needed loneliness as the clay needs heat; if she were crying—even for a mate—her tears would serve to wash away, not guilt (Flimmerhouse would hardly be concerned with such a word), but habits, acts, occasions, of stultifying memory.

If she had found out love, her old novitiate of lighter loves must find some purpose other than as a bell for her awakening. No careless crudity of satisfactions, no avid acceptances of any proffered boon, could have repaid the artist in Flimmerhouse—and what was there in Flimmerhouse except the artist?—could have repaid him for the injury worked to the very fibres of his fabrication?

His fabrication. And yet there were times with Rose Marie when he felt himself the merest spectator. He remained immobile, she swept onward. If her progress was like the flowing of the tides, he must have been the impeccable white-clad lounger sitting on the beach and wondering—a bit idly and yet with interest, too—how soon his feet would be wet from the incoming water. Yet tides flow out as well as in.

He was the same man that he had been on the night when he had first seen her, the same delicately adjusted mechanism of impulses and wisdoms, the same scruples stayed his hand and the same ruthlessness drove him to the same heights. But she had changed vitally, fundamentally—changed, he thought,

more greatly than even he had ever imagined it possible for human material to be changed.

Take, as an example, merely, her admittedly unrequited love. He couldn't help realizing from the first how plain, at first, the end had seemed to her. And then he realized also her hesitations, as they arrived—her gradual deviation from the straight path or prospect of sin.

The lighter barriers between them became finally as much of her building as of his. It might have been amusing, knowing what he knew, to have watched any other woman so surround herself. But nothing Rose Marie did was ever amusing. She was too magnificent, one was too lost in admiration of her glory.

Her glory that was in part his own. With most of his work he would have forgotten to give himself such credit, he was never self-conscious about his results, but with her his teaching her to act was so easily the lesser half of what he had done for her. He would promise to teach almost anyone to act, provided they had the power of surrendering themselves absolutely to his will. Though with most people, it didn't matter what you taught them—whatever they learned became in their hands so unimportant. Rose Marie could make more out of a very little learning. . . .

But in her case, what he had taught her transcended any mere histrionics. He could watch her smoulder and sway and swoon, lying there a clustered light on the great dim stage, the draggled glitter of grimed spangles clinging close—he could watch her audience—his audience, it was too—rise to it as they would have risen to a bull-baiting.

And yet it didn't mean nearly so much to him, that splendid spectacle, as to see Rose Marie bursting into his dark old office like a young Aurora, standing there before him, half apologetic and half brave, always with a smile and a book and a question. One would as well have thought—a man of his experience—of planning the seduction of a schoolgirl.

CHAPTER VII

Flimmerhouse fulfilled his promise to her, he made her a star, her name—Mary Davis—blazing in lights, and all her youth and beauty at last allowed to blaze.

He had been right in saying he could do that for her, and right also in predicting she would never be great. But she was somehow compelling and human. It showed how little her years of burlesque had counted that her forte was emotional rather than comic, and with no mean emotional sweep either. She had lost none of the old physical ascendancy, the thing—and it wasn't her beauty entirely—which had set her apart in the days long past.

Without being herself oversized, she still had the trick of making everyone else shrink to insignificance—and what further qualification for stardom could there be? And she had the trick—perhaps helped by her lack of an early training in control—of giving herself over to a mood, a sensation, as tossing leaves surrender to a wind; though with it all a sort of high austerity that was like the austerity of the very aged or the very young.

Perhaps the very young could most often lay claim to this serene untouched confidence. Flimmerhouse noticed the same thing in Jenny. Jenny was Rose Marie's little sister, whom she had taken to live with her.

It showed how great Rose Marie's independence of him became that Jenny arrived on the scene quite as a surprise to him. But when he knew the circumstances he gave his unqualified approval.

It was an outlet for her affections of which he never would have thought himself. But he couldn't think of everything.

During all the years, Rose Marie had never ceased to send money to her family. And she had at last made a compromise with anonymity and taken a post-office box for the purpose of receiving their acknowledgments and scanty news.

She was about as free of family ties as anyone well could be in a related world, but it was part of her development that in proportion as she grew farther away from her origin she grew to taking on a greater burden of responsibility towards her truck-driving, laundering kin. She gave them more attention and infinitely more help than when she had been forced, through dire threats, to assist in hanging out the clothes.

They accepted her help greedily, the wages of her shame—they didn't believe in her having become an actress—her likeness and her name, even if they had seen them in the day's news, would have been unrecognizable—they accepted, and she was saved from any sudden descent both by distance and her repeated warning that such an attempt on their part would automatically result in further assistance being withdrawn.

Her father met his death, characteristically, by being drunk and falling from his truck to be trampled by his horses. Her mother, after that release, and thanks to her, no longer washed. Her brothers and sisters scattered their several ways, married, worked, struggled.

But Rose Marie never encouraged any length of narration, and the Davis family were themselves too snowed under by the stress of living to descant upon its phases. They kept not only the substance but the spirit of her command not to bother her.

Therefore she was really very much unprepared when her mother wrote to her, hinting only too broadly that it would be very acceptable if she were to take Jenny off their hands.

Jenny was much the youngest of the family, born since Rose Marie had left, and—as her mother gave assurance—"prety like yu." All the rest of them could more or less take care of themselves now, but Jenny was still comparatively helpless.

"Yu have more time than enny of us in the daytime, and at nite she'd be aslepe—" So figured the thoughtful parent.

In due season the child arrived, having come the latter part of her journey in sole charge of the conductor. She arrived safely in the midst of possible hazard, and after much scrubbing and clothing and a good deal of preliminary instruction was taken into the presence of the great man.

Owing to a natural misunderstanding in the matter of relationship if Flimmerhouse had been subject to shocks he would have had the shock of his life.

Instead, he was delightfully calm.

"Oh—I didn't know—"

"But she isn't mine—"

"No?"

"She's my little sister."

The situation was explained, and then—

"I should have no possible reason for saying she was my sister if she wasn't—none whatever!"

Rose Marie in the maternal character—it was really more maternal than sisterly, whatever the actual facts—was new to Flimmerhouse.

But he had always found her like that, uncovering new strata of herself. And he recognized how the child filled for her a necessity—she was a tie, a balance, she made of Rose Marie a member of the social system in a sense even he could not do. He could lead her on to triumph—Mary Davis, blazing bright—he could be, on her account, the object of a general envy really far too sharp—and yet, for her, the child was stiff with elements he lacked. Her relation to Jenny had the solidity of a virtue never his. And even her triumph, the pinnacle of her success—and it wasn't so much a pinnacle as a wide, splendid plateau upon which Flimmerhouse had placed her—was firmer, somehow, because of her domestic cares.

It wasn't that she made of the child a nuisance, she was eminently practical and non-sentimental, in fact as soon as the weather was suitable she sent her down to a carefully selected place in the country with a more than carefully selected nurse. But she constantly considered her. And this consideration

was just the added touch that Rose Marie required.

It seemed to Flimmerhouse, and to her also, as if little Jenny had brought her luck. And it was such an easy casting of bread upon the waters. Flimmerhouse almost wished that the child had been his own.

And then he allowed himself to wonder whether he would have accepted her so whole-heartedly if she had been what he had in the first place thought she was. Would he have been jealous then, instead of acquiescent? Would he have welcomed so cordially what her presence accomplished for Rose Marie? Jenny did what he himself could not do. Why couldn't he? Couldn't Rose Marie feel maternal about him—consider him—care for him?

CHAPTER VIII

In one sense, Jenny was but a wisp of grass in a hayfield in comparison with Flimmerhouse. That is to say, in the sense of being a stimulating emotional influence.

In that sense, for Rose Marie, the child didn't exist at all. She had no wish to hold her close, press her to her heart, weep over her helplessness. She had no wish for children of her own—she was glad that Jenny wasn't hers, and she would have felt for her no greater tenderness even if she had been.

But even then she couldn't have been more kind, or brought to the little issues the child aroused a more thoughtful attention. She never was kind to Flimmerhouse like that. It may have been that he had never given her the chance to be, or that her relation to him—as a relation—had too little substance for kindness, for care. It was a thing all of fervours and ecstasies, a sort of worship within herself like the worship of a pilgrim at a shrine. And it had, always, a kind of ephemeral quality, which yet had managed to stand pretty well the test of years. It had never had to stand the test of reality. Now, as for Jenny, there was nothing in her relation to Jenny that wasn't real.

If Flimmerhouse had been some ten years younger than he was, and a good bit more than ten years less wise, she might have cared for him on the maternal side—she might have felt towards him more as she did towards Jenny—added to the other ways she felt.

But with him too much had gone before, and the very constitution of maternity demands that nothing shall have gone before—it must strike at the source. And with Flimmerhouse any source was a long way off. He was ageless, supreme, independent. She became independent of him too—but hers was an independence merely material—she reached a point where she could have walked her road without him. He was independent in a far larger way than that. And she hated him for it, and then trembled at her own audacity.

Flimmerhouse was like a mountain ever visible from her window—a mountain whose snows and greens marked her seasons, over which her sun rose and—paradoxically—behind which it set. And you couldn't be maternal with the earth itself. The earth itself was mother.

His shadow and his reflection were ever in her sight. His carefully modulated voice was her music and her thunder. His delicate hands shaped for her the very face of nature. Leaving Jenny out of it, of course, he so blocked and filled her world that she saw the small remainder which was not Flimmerhouse through his eyes. She saw how unworthy it was of her or of him or of anything—hardly human.

It seemed to her sometimes as if it all lay sprawling about her feet, as if this remainder which was not Flimmerhouse was all filled with mouths agape and tongues ahanging. She refused the ugly spectacle even a glance. She could have had so much so easily, but was it any wonder she abstained? The feast always spread sickened her—the ever-present plenty. It always had been spread—almost ever since she could remember. Every mouth that gaped reminded her of other mouths

that had not gaped in vain. Flimmerhouse alone was unapproachable. He alone wasn't waiting for her smile. That was all she needed to give now—a faint smile of thanks, a bow. She could now confer as great a favour by accepting a bouquet as she once might have conferred by allowing to be dropped into her purse a hundred-dollar bill. And her nod was as eagerly received as had been anything she had ever offered in return for the crisper gift.

Flimmerhouse had done that for her anyway. Oh, her redemption by him was very real, after all. And she couldn't have been redeemed by him if she hadn't loved him, any more than the unbeliever can receive absolution at the hands of the priest.

He formed for her a symbol, a graven image of God, a cross clasped by a nun. Her triumph, her success, what were these but the spilt blood of sacrifice? Was it any wonder that he would have made of any lesser image an intruder?

He was, perhaps, too much of a god, too little of a man. But the god was for her alone, the man had been for many—just as she had been for many men. He had been married once, before divorce or death had cut that unlikely tie. There were women she had seen, had talked to, who had roused in him and had from him much which only served to emphasize her own unbelievable failure. For she had failed. She discounted any great nobleness of self-denial. It couldn't have cost him such a great price to bury the man in the god, for if it had the cost might easily have been too high for him—for any man—to bear, so her experience of men had taught her.

Suppose, on the other hand, that she had needed—as some women undoubtedly did need—the very side presented to her, lack of which Flimmerhouse valued for her most—suppose that. Would he have come to her rescue then if he hadn't as an individual, as a man, desire to do so? Would he have met her need then merely to complete the abstract creation of the artist—wire the puppet?

It took years of her rather slow processes of decision to answer this negatively. As well imagine a Pharaoh bending his own back beneath stones for the building of a pyramid as Flimmerhouse using himself for any purpose not exquisitely of his own choice! He had a kind of superciliousness of physique—he wore gloves in the heat of summer and the heaviest furs that ever man was burdened with to guard against the cold of winter—he could stand on a dirty stage, surrounded by sweating, swearing, shirt-sleeved crowds, and be utterly saved from any suggestion of toil, be as aloof, and as dominant, as some dark-robed counsellor who sits at ease in the chamber of the king and hears at a distance the raging of the battle he has plotted.

There was a legend—there were always legends about Flimmerhouse—that he had sprung from the gutters of a foreign port. Well, lilies grow best in mud—take her own case. The metaphor was hardly new, but Rose Marie didn't know this—her knowledge was as simple and nearly as undiverse as it ever had been—a weapon, never a hindrance. Her sins, even, had been like that—never for the mere sake of sinning. She was not like Flimmerhouse, who might sin quite for the mere sake of sinning and for no other sake.

He possessed the key to a vast storehouse of experiences undiscarded and undisowned. He had no repentance, no regret. But then he had little knowledge—except possibly by theory—of really virtuous humanity. His views and his standards might have had power to shock many who were far less meticulous than he.

Even Rose Marie, who could look you as straight in the face as an eagle is said to look at the sun, could drop her eyes in his presence—in the presence of a cold breath of wisdom for which she was never prepared.

After years of their close association he still held his ability to surprise her. He surprised her in such little ways,

sometimes—this in spite of his being for ever in her consciousness. She would be waiting for him, watching for him, watching a door through which he might reasonably be expected to come, and he would always manage—not intentionally of course—to appear before her as though he had not made use of the usual facilities of approach.

He surprised her in greater ways, too. And yet she knew him well. She wondered if she didn't know him in some ways better than those other women had known him—better, even, than cleverer women than she.

She knew him so well, but it was the god in him she knew—or what she called the god. Cleverer women might have called it the creator—inasmuch as any artist is a creator. Cleverer women might have named him rightly, and pressed the advantage which she never pressed—the overwhelming amount of her debt to him. She owed him everything, and she neither felt nor displayed the gratitude which they would have used against him, to pry out the man from the god.

But her worship of him was all from afar. Even if Flimmerhouse the man should become one of the hungry mob which clamoured about her, she felt that for her Flimmerhouse the god would still remain impregnable.

The shrine she knelt at was for her inviolate. It would remain that, she felt, to the end.

Perhaps Rose Marie was incapable of loving the man in Flimmerhouse—that is to say, the real man, what there was of him. The man she might have loved would have been a very plain and simple man.

And yet her love for what she took for Flimmerhouse saved her as that other love could not have done at that late date—or perhaps ever. It was an ironic twist to a fortune otherwise preordained, that Flimmerhouse, neither plain nor simple nor even good, should have worked the miracle of a salvation.

For the man in Flimmerhouse was a strange creature, and in a manner shocking. It was small wonder she felt in his presence a cold breath of wisdom—a wisdom perhaps suited to a god, but wholly unnecessary to a mortal. He lacked virtue in a way that Rose Marie never had lacked it.

Even his love for her—when it came—lacked that. His love was the kind of love you might feel for a light you had looked at for a long time—a swaying, moving brilliance that you knew at last you had to grasp and crush and break and hide. It was the kind of love that racked his body and what was left of his soul, the love left over from all his other loves, born of the hope none of these had ever filled, the dream—not of the god—but of the man. And Rose Marie didn't understand. She was too good a woman. She hadn't been afraid of the god, but she found herself afraid of the man, and as scornful of him as she was of other men.

His luck, his skill, his unerring instinct, failed him for once. He was delivered into her hands, helpless at last—more helpless than little Jenny. But it was too late, he had overshot his mark. And so he still remained for her, at the end of years, the great, the unsolvable problem. He would remain that to the end of her long and happy life—even after he had become but a part of her half-forgotten past, even after the man in Flimmerhouse had stepped down from the god and offered her all for which she had ever hoped, and she had refused to accept what he prayed her on his knees to take.

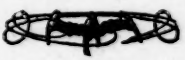
He came to her suddenly, shattering her image, terrifying her to retreat. He was no longer a symbol. He was no longer anything that he ever had been. It was as though he had stepped from another planet. He described himself as a swimmer who had been caught in the current and carried by the tide, who was clinging to her as a man might cling to save himself from drowning.

But she had no wish to drown with him in the dark water. Young, vigorous woman that she was, she knew then that she must have a clear stream and

another than he—almost any other—who could swim with her strongly. He offered her marriage, as if that would light the blackness—all her arrears of longing to be paid, and overpaid, by this shivering intruder who was Flimmerhouse, and yet not Flimmerhouse. And yet he must have been Flimmerhouse, because he killed her love, and no one but he could have done such. Rose Marie felt her love die within her as a woman might feel the convulsive death of a child. It was quite as sudden and as physical as that.

And as her love died, the strain and stress that had brought her so far, that had carried her to heights, that had taken her so straight through those curiously full and curiously empty years—this strain eased. And a peace came to her, and a quiet, and she looked out to a world crowded with a glory of life from which she had only to choose.

No, Flimmerhouse was no longer good enough—good in the strict and narrow sense of the word. Nor would he have been for any other woman to whom virtue had come.



THE LIAR

By Harry Kemp

I DARE not tell them: so I kiss, and lie—
I must have love, as summer must have rain;
And yet I know not which were greater pain:
To kiss them not; or feel Her standing by
While their soft, alien lips to mine reply. . . .
The clouted fisher that lets down his seine,
Losing some marvel of translucent stain
Must rest content, perforce, with smaller fry!

A FOOLISH woman wishes that her husband understood her; a wise women hopes that he never will.

A CLEVER woman is one who conceals her follies not from her enemies but from her friends.

A CHARMING woman is one who says little but leaves one wondering.

CHIVALRY

By Frank La Forrest

AS he walked across the Brooklyn Bridge late at night his attention was attracted by the actions of a woman. She would climb on the railing, stand poised for a moment and then shrink back, apparently afraid to jump. He hurried forward eager to help a woman in distress. He gave her the necessary push.

A POET

By Louis Untermeyer

THERE was a late and lonely nightingale,
That leaned its bosom on an icy thorn;
And, from the branch that threatened to impale,
A living ecstasy was born.

So you have conquered agony, and torn
A triumph out of torture. O rejoice
While, from the stab of loneliness and scorn,
Rises the rapture of your voice.

A KISS is like an act in a vaudeville show. One always wonders what is coming next.

"THE Unknown Purple"—any woman's past.

THE RUBBER BALL

By Richmond Brooks Barrett

I

JOHN Gibbs was forty-five. His wife was forty-three, with the contours, the dignity and the brains of a rubber ball; when left to herself, the lady was placid, content to sit in her boudoir all day long, with her round blue eyes fixed on the ceiling.

This ceiling was in no way remarkable. It boasted neither mirror nor decoration of any kind; it was just an unruffled stretch of smooth white plaster. That it satisfied Mrs. Gibbs was obvious; it was indeed the unblemished blankness of it that she loved. Within was the unfurnished mind; above was the spotless expanse of calsomine.

No wonder Mrs. Gibbs was unperturbed! In the hands of her husband this woman achieved activity of a sort; she bobbed about in her chair and laughed a very gay and rippling response to whatever attentions he saw fit to lavish on her. It was quite as if he were playing a game with an inherently inane object, bouncing it up and down with boisterous good-nature and, to show off his own dexterity, keeping the thing in motion for an indefinite period.

Mrs. Gibbs herself never tired of this treatment; her elasticity would have kept her dancing at his side for ever. Approaching middle-age and downright unwieldiness were powerless to deaden her resilience. It was always John who grew weary; Mrs. Gibbs, when he had done with her, would still keep in motion for a time, still bounce a bit, as it were, but with decreasing force, until at last she came to rest again, serene in her rubber ball passivity.

There were two blonde, plump daughters, whom Mrs. Gibbs had, in all gaiety and unconcern, brought into the world before she was well out of her teens.

Rhoda and Dorothy were twenty-four and twenty-three respectively. They were no longer mere Gibbses. Reared in the belief that the cleverest thing a girl can do is to get married before she is mature enough to make her début, Rhoda and Dorothy had both become matrons at seventeen. Mrs. Morland, the elder, had already four babies to her credit; moreover, she had without a single pang gained forty pounds since her wedding. Mrs. Mason, at twenty-three, was the slightly apologetic mother of two infants, with only twenty-nine pounds acquired under her husband's roof; she had begun to be afraid that her sister's record was unique, unbreakable.

John, it must be remembered, was forty-five; with three such substantial women on the scene, a man would naturally at this period of his life be settled and even inclined towards weariness. Not so John, however. Handsome, choleric and active, he had the roseate outlook of a boy; indeed, he fell in love with everything he encountered.

Absurd little enthusiasms were his; for example, it had been his practice for a decade to leap out of bed at six-thirty every morning in summer and, clad in abominable clothes, to make tracks through the dewy grass straight for a mowing-machine. Once at the handle, he would plunge across the lawn with the fine fury of a charioteer.

Fountains of fresh-smelling grass would spurt up around him as he sped along; the sharp blades under his guidance would emit a thin but piercing hum, as of a plague of locusts. The women would be startled from their delicious slumber into aggrieved wakefulness.

Gibbs, usually very thoughtful, in this case was ruthless; no entreaties could move him from his mad course. Seven-thirty would find him, appallingly pink from exertion but uncommon blithe notwithstanding, leaving muddy footprints on the stairs as he ascended to the cold bath that awaited him. Throwing off his clothes jubilantly, he would scold and argue with his lean and delicate valet, warning the chap against a sedentary life, even offering to supply him with a mowing-machine of his own for purposes of exercise.

Gibbs was proud to the point of boastfulness on the subject of grass-cutting; the gardeners were hard put to it to run over the lawn after the master had not got through and to shave neatly, without being seen, the places he had in his uproarious progress neglected. Had anyone been discovered in the illicit act, there would have been an explosion.

It was the same with tennis. When the girls were hardly higher themselves than a racket, Gibbs had them hauled to the court by their nurses. There they underwent terrifying ordeals, all in the name of practice. Rhoda was hopeless from the first; no amount of sternness or of coaxing was of any avail. She simply couldn't hit a ball, that was all there was to it. Her arms seemed to be stuck into their sockets in such fashion as to bar athletic feats of every sort. Her serve for the most part resolved itself into a lob of ludicrous feebleness; the ball was sure to sink to the ground long before it reached the net.

One day, when the unfortunate little thing was at an extremely sensitive age, her father caught her with a smart drive, right in the pit of the stomach. A complete loss of breath followed the soft thud of the impact; Rhoda was quite sure she had received her death-blow. From that day, she refused pointblank to face her brutal father on the court; her tennis efforts ended then and there.

Dorothy persevered and played a rattling good game by the time she was fifteen. Marriage stopped her in mid-career. If Edward Mason had not showed up when he did, she would have had her father at her mercy. Gibbs would without doubt have resented a trouncing from an upstart daughter; so it was just as well she gave up tennis for babies and avoirdupois.

John Gibbs was incurably the impressionable youth. Not the least potent of his ardours was the worship of beauty as embodied in pretty women.

Marriage in his case had been such a calm and simple relation that he at no time was sufficiently absorbed by it to be free from the throes and ecstacies of flirtations. He had begun to fall in love indiscriminately many years before rushing into wedlock; and naturally enough, after his wedding he kept right on being victimized by his heart. The vows he had stammered out at the altar had not the effect of an inoculation against the disease he suffered from; they had no effect at all, if the truth be told.

Carrie was an adorable wife and could be counted on to make things pleasant; but she might just as well have been a baby, for all the power she had of keeping Gibbs's eyes from roving afar. He still looked out upon the world; and he still received the relentless winged shafts that pierced his heart and vibrated there, to his intense joy and feverish unrest.

In spite of the fact that Gibbs was wealthy and something of a sport, he was more innocent than any adolescent. The only wicked things about him were his complexion and his clothes from Poole. He adored women and never concealed it from them. Extravagant compliments he excelled in. Once in a great while, he permitted himself the

liberty of stroking a white hand; he had even been known to plant a kiss on a seductive pair of lips.

Forgetting his obese Carrie altogether, he often felt the elation and wondrous thrill of a man who has just become engaged for the first time. Being a true and chivalrous aristocrat, Gibbs confined himself to the women of his own class. He hid nothing from his wife.

He would often treat Carrie to an effusion of this sort:

"Carrie dear, did you ever see such a winner as Mrs. Chester? She has the most *wonderful* eyes; and her neck and arms! For such a slender woman it's absolutely remarkable. And she's got such a jolly, sentimental way about her. We had a long talk last night at Reggie Brown's. We fell for each other, I can tell you!"

Mrs. Gibbs would laugh in her pretty, blithe way.

"You shouldn't flirt like that," she would always tell him; her voice, high and birdlike and ineffectual, was charming. "You will spoil the other men's chances, John."

This tribute delighted him. It gave the finishing touch to his self-content.

Carrie never for a moment suspected that people poked fun at John. John didn't suspect it either. He thought himself an unconscionable beau, the object of all men's jealousy. He pitied the husbands of the women he became infatuated with. It would have hurt him no end had he known the kindly, superior attitude everybody assumed in speaking of him.

"John Gibbs is an old fool—and a fearful bore—but a good chap just the same." So the men dismissed him.

The women were no more generous. "Isn't John Gibbs absurd? He cornered me last night at the Browns' dance and talked perfect rot for an hour at least." Thus Mrs. Carter. And in the same vein all the ladies of his desire unburdened themselves confidentially. "But so good-hearted—and a gentleman. Of course one puts up with him; one would be brutal not to."

Gibbs *was* a dear; it came to that in the end. Mild affection, as towards a garrulous maiden-aunt, was what people felt for him. Gibbs was unique, undeniably. He possessed a sleek and worldly-seeming hide; beneath he was guileless, easily as ingenuous as his Carrie.

II

JOHN, when his forty-fifth birthday had passed without leaving him so much as a grey hair or a crow's-foot to warn him of his ripe maturity, fell more desperately in love than ever before. He prostrated himself in all honesty and humility at the feet of young Mrs. Percival.

Now Winifred Percival was just the age of John's daughter Rhoda; indeed she had run off with all the glory at Rhoda's wedding. A beautiful, slender maid of honour, clad like a mauve orchid, is not the sort of attendant a plump bride should choose. Rhoda had never quite forgiven the innocent Winifred for sweeping everything before her on that day. The friendship, however, had not withered away; it survived the shock. It was at Rhoda's house that John Gibbs met Winifred time and again and in the end succumbed unconditionally.

Winifred too was guileless. Like all girls in the rudimentary stages of experience, she fancied that there was but one way to keep a husband madly in love: the poor fellow must be in a constant fever-heat of jealousy.

Men over forty made particularly nice quarry for the young matron out to flirt, thought Winifred. She therefore buttonholed the susceptible Gibbs with all speed. Winifred accepted John at his surface value and suspected him of being a perfect roué. Needless to say, the two got on famously.

Mrs. Percival and Gibbs took to dropping in on Rhoda for tea. They were quite shameless, nibbling away at the choicest little cakes the Morland kitchen afforded, eating quantities of bonbons and in general vying with

each other in the consumption of dainty edibles. They acted as if they owned the place; Rhoda was simply there to pour out things for them and to oppose an obstacle of decorum over which they could signal to each other maliciously.

John's stolid daughter was like a big ornate brick wall planted between them; they talked across it, came within an inch of exchanging winks and even, at times, scaled it with clandestine boldness.

The situation was delicious; Winifred and John had the time of their lives. Their inroads on the larder over, these two rogues would get up and stroll away with most perfunctory and casual messages of thanks to their hostess. They would scamper off to the gardens, to the tennis-court, to any place in fact that hid them from Rhoda.

Bursts of laughter from the unseen truants would float out from clumps of shrubbery or rhododendron walks and assail the ears of Mrs. Morland. If Winifred at this period acted like a silly rattle-brained thing of sixteen, John's conduct was of the sort to disgrace a boy of twelve.

Never before had Gibbs been so sportive, so rollicking. He regaled Carrie with every detail of the good times he and Winifred were having.

Carrie, at rest in her big chair, would beam upon him as he talked. She would wave her round arms feebly and make little curtseying motions, as if she were executing a gay dance to show her pride of possession, her appreciation of this man's sly wiles.

Her light, unquenchably refreshing laugh would bubble from her and fill the room with its brightness.

"Marion Deland told me yesterday that you and Winnie danced *beautifully* together." Thus Carrie. "She said, 'John doesn't look a day over twenty; it's a delight to see those two children on the dance-floor.'"

And Carrie raised her arms as high as she was able, fluttering the lids over her round eyes and swaying passionately in the rhythm of "The Blue Danube."

John roared out his appreciation of Mrs. Deland's flattering commentary.

"Winnie's a stunning dancer," he admitted. "She's nothing but thistledown, doesn't seem to weigh an ounce, you know. A man can't help making a good showing with Winnie."

This with becoming modesty.

One afternoon at Rhoda's, Winifred tripped away as soon as tea was over, leaving John at the mercy of his daughter.

"I'm so sorry, John," apologized the unblushing Winifred. "I wanted you to show me those Scotch Highland puppies that were hatched to-day. But I *must* be off. Don't forget—I count on you for to-morrow."

Alone with her father, Rhoda went right to the point:

"I think you're acting in a very silly way, Papa. A man with six grandchildren ought to have a little dignity, a sense of decency."

John strove to hit the jocular note:

"Well, it's not my fault if I have six grandchildren; you're the guilty one, it seems to me. A girl of twenty-four shouldn't do things up quite so brown as you have."

Rhoda presented a blank countenance. Her way of registering disapproval was to efface all expression.

"At least I do nothing that a young wife should be ashamed of," she drawled.

"Heaven forbid!" protested John. "You're a perfect pillar of maternity. But, don't you see, by having a child of your own at eighteen, you rather took the wind out of my sails. If you hadn't stepped in as you did, Carrie and I might have had a boy yet. But with a grandson before him, a man gets discouraged no end. Now the Gibbs line will be extinct."

"Please don't try to be clever; you're only being vulgar." Rhoda affixed her expressionless eyes on a sofa-cushion. "I am going to tell you this afternoon what I should have told you long ago. You and Winifred Percival are behav-

ing disgracefully. I don't say you've done anything wrong; I know you haven't. But this flirting and philandering at forty-five is inexcusable—and with a girl the age of your own child."

"What nonsense!" John chuckled. "Winnie's a dear, just like my own daughter. Why, think of the years when I used to jog her up and down on my knee."

"That makes no difference. When a girl is married, it's time she gave up such things." Rhoda was vague.

"My dear Rhoda, do you mean you think I *still* take her on my knee?" John shook with merriment. "I don't, I swear by all that's holy."

A tiny shiver raced up Rhoda's spine; but her spine being buried at least an inch below the surface, the shiver passed unnoticed.

"Don't think you can silence me by joking," she announced. "For years, I have seen you paying attention to women. I have said nothing, because I felt it wouldn't be delicate for a daughter to discuss that sort of thing with her father. I left it to Mother; but, since Mother does nothing and since *this* case demands attention, I find I am forced to talk to you."

"Of course your mother does nothing." John was incisive. "She's absolutely content; I tell her all about Winnie and she likes me to. We have perfect pow-wows together over Winnie. Carrie loves the girl just as much as I do."

"Poor Mother!" was all Rhoda gave out in response.

"Why in thunder do you say 'Poor Mother!'?" John didn't understand.

"Because I know that she is cut to the heart, because I know how terribly she feels this slight. Do you suppose she enjoys neglect? Do you think for a moment she is happy while you run about after other women?"

Rhoda's words were melodramatic, but her pose remained apathetic. Her gaze was still at rest on the plump sofa-cushion.

Gibbs shook his head.

"Look here, Rhoda," he said, "don't you worry about your mother; I've lived with her for twenty-five years and I understand her a long sight better than you do. Carrie wouldn't tip the scales at a hundred and sixty if she worried, now would she?"

Rhoda sighed. "My life is one of constant anxiety and *I* weigh a hundred and fifty. Because mother is stout, you feel that you may behave as badly as you choose."

"It's not only because she's stout," demurred Gibbs. "She's so damned jolly, you know. You're rather an ass, Rhoda, it seems to me—kicking up this row over nothing at all."

"Papa!" Rhoda's voice rose for the first time. "I ask you not to speak insultingly to me in my own house."

"All right." John yielded the point.

"Mother is unhappy." Rhoda took it for granted that the thing was settled. "She keeps it from you, of course, because she has very old-fashioned ideas. She believes a woman should not burden others with her cares, not even the one who causes those cares. You are too selfish to realize such delicacy on her part. You have to be told."

Gibbs pondered it.

"I don't believe a word of this," he protested, but without his usual conviction.

Rhoda's weighty certainty was causing him misgivings, in spite of himself.

"At least you ought to put it to the test." Rhoda seldom permitted herself a conversation of such length. Despite her earnestness, she was getting sleepy; a succession of yawns played havoc with her face.

With unwonted tenacity, she kept to her subject and followed it through to the end.

"All I ask of you is this," she urged, her articulation becoming more and more indistinct. "Papa, please give up all flirting; devote yourself *entirely* to mother and see if what I say isn't true. You will soon find a light in her eyes that isn't there now."

Rhoda's voice trailed away in senti-

mental softness; her eyes, glazed with sleep, were half shut.

"I'll do it," promised Gibbs. "I'll do it—but under protest. You've talked rot, pure drivel I swear, this whole afternoon. I never heard such nonsense."

He got up and scuffled out of the room.

"Preposterous — utterly preposterous!" he tossed at the somnolent Rhoda as he crossed the threshold.

He kept on growling and muttering, "Mere tommyrot—utterly preposterous!" until he reached his own house.

III

For a week, John Gibbs kept at Carrie's side and examined her with intensity. She would sit before him in her soft-cushioned chair, her absurdly short arms at rest, her little fat feet, which missed the floor by a good twelve inches, on a stool.

It was quite true, John admitted to himself many times, that there was no light of any sort in her eyes; he had never before noticed how rayless she was. *Could* it be unhappiness?

He vexed his mind with the question, found he was pitying her in his heart and grew to loathe himself for a brute. Rhoda's words had struck in, not a doubt of it. John began to watch in melancholy taciturnity for the first flicker of the new and transfiguring radiance his constant attendance would fan to activity in those eyes.

Carrie was dazed by the turn events had taken; she was at a loss, distinctly uneasy and shy before him. After long silences, during which her husband gazed at her without so much as a moment's wavering, she would break out into a gush of unmeaning laughter and begin to move her arms faintly like clumsy flippers; but somehow the outburst would fail of conviction, missing the note of jollity.

John would smile a tender response and try his best to think of something worth saying. To his bitter dismay, he discovered at last that it was impossible to keep a single topic going, now he had turned over a new leaf; the knowledge came to him that he and his wife had had but one subject of conversation in the past—the flirtations he had indulged in. As John stood before her at present, he was like a peddler without his pack of gay and tantalizing wares; he was struck dumb.

Gibbs still rose at six-thirty and made with all speed for the lawn-mower; but somehow his heart was not in the work. The machine under his hand seemed to echo his state of mind; it would hang back from its task with an introspective purring, as if a mental burden, racking it, had sapped its physical strength. The new-mown grass no longer leaped high into the air on either side; rather it appeared to bow its neck sadly to the axe and welcome the kindly deathblow.

Gibbs did his best to overcome this bewildering lassitude within himself and this weary response of Nature to his mood. He would shake his head savagely, curse at the machine and dash ahead at breakneck speed; but in a moment he would find that, unconsciously, he had slackened the pace and was crawling over the turf. He ended by giving up the job in despair soon after seven. He took to scolding his valet roundly and to shivering at the shock of his cold bath.

With a cowardice he would have thought himself incapable of a fortnight before, John ran a generous amount of water from the hot faucet into the tub one morning when Hubbard was out of ear-shot. This confession of weakness made the cup of his self-loathing overflow.

John cursed himself for a misanthrope, for a hypochondriac, even for an old woman. It must be, he admitted, that the years were beginning to crush him with their weight.

Three months more of this would see *him*, John Gibbs, with a paunch! Better death than that, he had always cried; now he surprised himself in a lethargic acceptance of the hateful protuberance that was to be.

Poor Carrie at the end of the week

was even more miserable than John. The light had not come into her eyes; instead, a cloud of anxiety had crept in and dimmed the porcelain-like polish of them. Her rotund Little Mary, which had ever been as sound as a bell, became upset. The unfortunate creature for the first time suffered, mentally and physically.

Had this situation of Rhoda's making gone on for three months, John Gibbs would indubitably have had his paunch and Carrie would have been in her grave. It was for Dorothy, the younger daughter, to precipitate the blessed crisis.

Dorothy entered her mother's boudoir one afternoon in a state of intense perturbation. She greeted John with a wondering lift of the eyebrows; it was the fourth time that week she had found him on the scene and she was unable to conceal her surprise.

For a few moments, she talked in a wild and incoherent way about her babies.

Then, squaring her shoulders, she plunged.

"I've got something on my mind; I *can't* keep it to myself," she announced. "Mama and Papa, I am a very unhappy girl."

John and Carrie gasped out their incredulity, their protest at the complexity and the injustice of life.

"Yes, I am unhappy," Dorothy went on. "Edward is not the husband he should be. He is thoughtless and unkind."

"My darling Dot!" John was at sea. "What has he done to you?"

A grisly vision danced before his eyes; he could see with terrible distinctness his irate son-in-law wiping the floor up with Dot, thumping her roundly, blacking both her eyes. He grew purple with indignation.

"Oh, he *does* nothing," elucidated Dorothy. "He simply is beginning to ignore me, to treat me with indifference. If you *knew* how I've struggled, in the past three months! I used to be so contented and I didn't mind getting fat—I liked it, I really did; but Rhoda told me I was losing my hold on Edward. Of course I couldn't bear that. I got right to work on myself. I have a masseuse for two hours every day; she slaps me and kneads me and all that sort of thing but somehow I can't seem to lose an ounce. I do my best to amuse Edward. I play tennis with him; I'm taking dancing-lessons too. But he neglects me. He runs away from me and flirts with other girls; and then he makes matters worse by talking about the creatures to *me*. Oh, I am so wretched! I kept all this from you, because I didn't want to worry you. What *shall* I do, Mama?" Dorothy's tears were already flowing.

At this moment Mrs. Gibbs did a strange thing. She filled the air with a lilting chirrup of laughter, spontaneous and gay. Dorothy jumped and looked hurt; John rushed in terror to his Carrie's side. She waved him away and trod a dainty measure with her feet on the little stool in front of her.

"Dot, my love," she carolled, "you are a silly duck. Look at your father and mother. John runs after pretty ladies and tells me about them. I hope he always will. Roly-polies like us should all have flirty husbands, my sweet. We must make ourselves in love with love-affairs. Then our husbands will be glad to tell us everything. Fat people *are* lazy. We can sit back, don't you see, and enjoy the stories of sweethearts second-hand. Dot darling, Edward can't be a worse flirt than Johnnie. Don't try to keep up with him. Sit back like me. I am the happiest, cosiest little woman in the world."

Mrs. Gibbs beamed on them with her old-time serene vacuity. Dorothy was still too thunderstruck to grasp the profound truth her mother had delivered in such sugared language; but John understood.

In all delicacy, Carrie had just implored him to go back to the old promiscuous life; she had got her grievance off her mind in skilful fashion. She had

told him how blank the world was without the delectable accounts of his love-affairs. John burst into a guffaw of immense joy.

He was standing at a window; suddenly he shouted "By Jove!" kissed Carrie with tremendous enthusiasm and was off.

He met Mrs. Percival at the foot of the verandah steps.

"What *has* become of you, John?" queried Winifred. "Have you been ill? I've been asking Edward Mason about you every day. He's been most unsatisfactory so I decided to find out for myself." She gave him her most roguish smile.

John had both her hands by this time. "Do come right down to the kennels, Winnie dear. You must see the Scotch Highland pups!"

They scampered off. From the house a lark-like call reached them. At her boudoir window stood Carrie, out of breath from the exertion of piloting herself across the floor, but nevertheless radiant. She trilled out a greeting to Winifred, waved a hand prettily and warbled a benediction: "Have a good time, sweet children!"

John grasped Winnie's arm and broke into a frisky canter. He was a boy once more; he would be for ever paunchless!

THE UNFORTUNATE

By T. F. Mitchell

HIS poor memory and absent-mindedness had got him into such an unfortunate mixup that he resolved to end it all. He carefully stuffed the keyhole, the window cracks, and then threw himself on the bed. Next morning when he did not appear at breakfast they went upstairs and smashed in the door. They found him snoring peacefully. He had forgotten to turn on the gas.

THE PRAYER

By Bertha Bolling

I STAND away, to watch you as you pass
Within the temple gates; because, to-day,
As other days, I know that you will come—
And enter in to pray.

I see the hyacinths shimmer by the wall;
And then, I catch their fragrance on the air.
But, no! It is the colour of your eyes—
The perfume of your hair!

WHEN A WOMAN TARRIES

By Gertrude Brooke Hamilton

I

MURIEL was somewhere in her teens when she asked Brice Hathaway to divorce his wife, marry her—and live simply ever after.

She was in love with Brice, of course; in love so openly that it galvanized her mother, amused her father, and shocked all the nice infants of her season, who wouldn't for the world have wasted their charms on an ineligible man.

Muriel Fendall's love for Brice took no count of the conventions; it was like a spring freshet leaping in an unfenced meadow, a bird bursting its throat in song, a flower unfolding to the kiss of the sun.

"Let's live as God meant us to live," cried Muriel, on the heels of her impulsive suggestion. "Let's have a little home somewhere in the country, with baby chickens and apple trees in bloom and rye fields waving near the door; or let's live close to humanity, let's go up to the Bronx and get a flat, and both work, and hang to the same strap in the subway. Oh, Brice," with a break in her voice, "let's be simple, you and I."

Hathaway found a natural enjoyment in these rhapsodies.

"If only we could!" he sighed.

"But we can," she laughed. "We can be anything we choose."

"Can we?" His voice sank with the question.

"And we can do anything we please!" She lifted her hand from the wheel of her roadster—they were in the Westchester hills for a day. "Witness this jaunt, Brice. It pleased me to manœuvre it through as much as it might have pleased mamma to outwit it! I think she had half a suspicion of what I was going to say to you to-day—the maternal intuition, you know. Poor mamma! Why is it they always forget what love once meant to them?"

"Because they must, I suppose," replied Hathaway, watching her hair blow out in the wind.

She turned a face bright with rebuke.

"There you go again, with your 'musts' and your dour suppositions! The trouble is," tenderly, "you're a drifter; and that's why you've made such a mess of your life, marrying money, falling in love with me, and sighing away your soul. Honey, I'm a doer. Leave the happy solution to me."

He was inclined to laugh, with colour heightening in his handsome face and in his eyes a stealing shame. After a second, he ejaculated:

"You're right. I've drifted. Please forgive me if I've worked any harm in your life, Muriel. Be a wise child, and forget me."

His tone suggested a good-bye.

She would not listen to his self-berating, but gave him a look that hotly refuted his having worked anything but good to her, anything but good! Her hands held the wheel of the roadster in a fine, firm grip and the tilt of her head was idyllic, a smile played over her mouth, whose frank redness her mother deplored, and the earth-coloured eyes, that her father loved, brimmed with warmth.

"As if I could forget you!" she said.

At a turn of the pike they were traversing, a wagon-road caught her eye, a by-road never made for motoring, just a crooked country thoroughfare full of gullies and gaps.

"Once," she said, laughing, "I found a funny little house at the end of that road; no one was living there, the win-

dows were broken and the doors unhinged, wild honeysuckle had grown into a front room—I got out my tea-basket and had a feast there, all by myself."

With a swerve that jolted every bolt of the roadster, she took the wagon-path, and laughed again as the gullies almost precipitated them from their seats.

"I've brought my tea-basket along with me to-day, Brice. Oh, wouldn't mamma quite detest tea in an unlived-in hut with wild honeysuckle and no doorsteps!"

Brice laughed with her, at the spectacle evoked: Mrs. Roger Fendall drinking tea in the vacated shanty at the end of the wagon-road.

He had the tea-basket out as soon as they were there, and was sniffing the honeysuckle and pushing open the sagging door with a zest that showed he was already half forgetful of anything but the sunny day, the delightful spot, and tea with Muriel.

In a crumbling room curtained with trellises of green, he set out the tea-things on the floor.

"When you feasted alone did you have to resort to thermos bottle, or did you find a well and a bucket?" he asked her.

"I found the well." She was carrying the tea-kettle to the door. "Come and see."

The well was all that a well should be!—with mossy bucket, rusty, creaking chain, and water cold and clear. He filled the kettle and she splashed the rest of the water over him; they had a water-battle for a few minutes, until both of them were sparkling with drops like diamonds. Highly coloured, glowing, they carried in the kettle and made tea. As there were no chairs, they sat on the floor. The smell of the honeysuckle filled the room.

"And, now," said Muriel, over the teacups, "let's talk again of your divorce. When will you get it?"

"You speak as if getting a divorce were easy as pulling up a bucket of water," he retorted, gaily.

"Isn't it?" she questioned.

"I don't know, not having tried it."

She reached out for a sprig of honeysuckle, and pulled a flower apart to find its drop of honey.

"I can hardly wait for it to come off," she sighed. "Mamma will rave—she thinks I should marry no less than a million; and dear old Roger F. will cock a quizzing eyebrow at me. And we'll be married very simply, you and I."

She leaned across the impromptu tea-table to put a honied flower to his lips, all her love for him was brimming in her very young face, brooding in her eyes and curving her mouth into love's bowknot.

He showed that drifting was, perhaps, his worst quality by getting up suddenly and walking to one of the broken windows, where he stood for a moment with his hands in his pockets and his back to her.

"Muriel," he said, at length, "you aren't in earnest about me; are you? You're just filling in the span before you marry some nice 'doer' with this flirtation; aren't you? You don't really mean this tom-foolery, dear."

She put the rejected honey-drop to her own lips.

"I mean every word of it, and you know that I do," undisturbed.

"But, Muriel!"

He came back to the centre of the room, looking down at her with flushing face and embarrassed eyes.

"Come, now, you don't really mean it," coaxingly. "It isn't feasible, you know."

In a friendly way, he sat beside her on the dusty floor and took her hand in his.

"Let me talk to you like a grandfather for a few minutes, dear girl; you don't love me; you wouldn't want me for a lifetime; you're just making up a fairy tale. Your mother is right. You should marry no less than a million. Why, I haven't a cent of my own. Not a cent, Muriel. I'm the veriest beggar living. I wouldn't be able to keep up even your roadster! Dear, let's forget

all about it, and be friends again. Please!"

He patted the hand in his.

She was regarding him with clouding eyes.

"Why don't you tell the truth?" she said, finally. "You don't love me."

He grew red to the roots of his hair, and, trying to laugh, defended himself with:

"Have I ever said I loved you?"

"No," she admitted; "not in words."

"If you've drawn any undue demonstration from my actions," a bit stiffly, "I'm sorry."

"If I have—" Her teeth caught her under lip.

"I'm sorry," he repeated, less constrainedly.

She sat quiescent for a minute or two longer.

"Oh!" was all she said, when she drew her hand from his and jumped to her feet; flaming.

As there seemed no reply to her exclamation, he began to gather up the tea-things; waiting until a pleasanter topic might come into her mind and help out the awkward silence.

She watched him pack the tea-basket.

Stooping to catch up her hat, she cried, with miserable passion.

"You've made love to me with your eyes ever since my first party! You know you have! You've had a good time, waking me up. Well! I'm awake!—Good-bye!"

She dashed from the place, dragging on her hat.

"Muriel!"

By the time he reached the sagging door, she was in her roadster.

He hurried to her, protesting.

"Don't be angry, Muriel! Please, don't be angry with me. Maybe I am to blame." His face was perturbed. "But, sometimes, dear, I'm in deep water."

She had recovered her equilibrium and lost some of the flaring colour.

"I'm sorry I can't take you back to town," she shrugged, wrenching the wheel. "Swim back, fly back, crawl back, poor dear!"

She was gone like the wind—a streak of bright colour jolting down the wagon-road to the smoother leagues of pike. Carrying out her idea that one should do as she pleased, it pleased her to leave him in the heart of the Westchester hills with no more means of locomotion than her tea-basket!

All the way back to town she drove at mad speed; green scenery flew by her; white roads unwound before her; blue skies reeled over her. She loved him! He did not love her. How was she to go on living?—a spring freshet dammed, a bird with a broken throat, an unkissed flower.

The face she brought home with her petrified her mother—white cheeks and staring eyes. People who have outgrown youth are apt to be aghast at youth's capacity for suffering!

Mrs. Roger Fendall thought that something really terrible had happened, that the richest man on Muriel's string had cut her dead in public, or that Roger F. had been declared bankrupt. When these possibilities were shattered by Muriel's taut declaration of a headache, Mrs. Fendall put her daughter to bed, deploring the havoc neuralgia could work with beauty. The family physician was hastily summoned; but, as he happened to be out of town, a younger practitioner came in his place to cure Muriel's terrible headache.

"One of the Nords; Doctor George Nord's son, my dear," crooned Mrs. Fendall, introducing the physician to Muriel. "Tell him where the pain is, darling."

Muriel had thrown all her pillows at her maid and bound her head with a handkerchief soaked in exquisite orange-water, her hair hung all about her, under the bandaging kerchief, her eyes were enormous and solemn. "Go away," she said, distinctly, to one of the Nords.

The next thing she knew, she was weeping a freshet of tears on the shoulder of a young doctor, who had eyes that somehow told her he knew the pain was not in her head.

II

MURIEL was somewhere in her twenties when George Nord, junior, asked her, for the seventh time to marry him, and was rejected.

She did not know quite why she refused him—as she was in a position where matrimony seemed a grave necessity, Roger F. having died insolvent and Mrs. Fendall's hopes of resuscitated fortunes being centred on her marriageable daughter. The Nords were all well-to-do. She had no real reason for the seventh negative.

"So be it," said Nord, incisively. "I'll not ask you again, Muriel."

She half wished she might believe him, for she was rather inclined to weep whenever they went through a scene like this, that left him so short-tongued.

"I'm sorry," she murmured, sincerely.

"So am I." George Nord looked away from her.

Following his look, she eyed ranges of autumnal mountains and a sky grey above the flaming foliage of Indian Summer—the widow and daughter of the late Roger F. were spending the tag-end of the warm season in the Adirondacks. She was walking with George Nord, and now they entered a wood where, one by one, golden and ochre, scarlet and grey-green, leaves were drifting from the trees. Idly, she stretched out her hand and caught a honey-coloured leaf as it fell. She put it to her lips, meditative.

"If only I could!" she sighed.

"Don't worry any more about it," advised Nord, in his crisp way. "I should have taken my medicine long ago, and gone off."

His face locked and he folded his arms.

At the end of the walk through the colourful wood where the leaves were drifting down, he said good-bye to her.

Muriel pressed his hand in both of hers; she was surely not the type to cry easily, yet, for some reason, this particular Nord inevitably started freshets within her. Her step through the fashionable hostelry in which she and her mother were stopping was slower than usual.

In their suite of rooms at the top of the hotel—where Mrs. Fendall was daintily sudding some fine lingerie in a sanctuary of nickel and porcelain—Muriel sank into a chair and sighed, so deeply that her mother echoed the sound.

Poor Mrs. Roger F.! One of the terrible things that had hung over her had descended—Roger's death and bankruptcy. She was now ready to meet the other calamity—the richest man on Muriel's string slipping off.

"What is it, darling?" she asked apprehensively, wringing a cobweb chemise in her thoroughly patrician hands.

"Only George Nord, mamma," replied Muriel, looking at the drifts of suds falling from the fine mull.

Mrs. Fendall's second sigh was one of relief. "I thought, perhaps, you had quarrelled again with Mr. Montbell."

Muriel shook her head. Sam Montbell, who had pots of money, was one of Muriel's present admirers.

Stretching a travelling clothes-line and fastening lingerie to it with miniature pins, Mrs. Fendall's modulated voice was edged:

"You have been out a half-dozen seasons. Imagine it! You, with the Fendall looks and my breeding! Muriel, you must not waste another day on young men like George Nord's son. You were meant to marry at least a million. I always said so to your dear father. And now, along comes one of the Montbells, and dangles at your heels for a whole summer! My dear, lose no time. He must speak before we leave here. If he doesn't, I'm sure I don't know what is going to become of us."

The suds gurgled sadly as it sank in the porcelain basin.

Hands locked behind her head in an attitude of disdainful ease, Muriel looked through the window at the mountains, a flock of wild geese was etched against the sky—a glimmer of silvery grey, quickened by the curious

calling, "Onk, onk onk." She watched the wild geese with eyes that clouded from the colour of the earth to the colour of the sky.

Her mother's well-bred voice threaded in and out of her reflections; a direful forecast of what they might come to if Muriel did not make the most of her charms; then the shimmer of wild geese calling up in the sky; a lamentation that people of refinement ever had to suffer poverty; the geese, calling, fainter, and fainter.

Muriel reached to a desk for writing materials.

Face devoid of any special emotion, she wrote to George Nord, bidding him come back and voice an eighth proposal of marriage, that she might accept him. Though she did not cherish any devouring affection for the young physician, marrying him might save her from the Montbell dangling at her heels.

The letter to Nord lay unmailed for a couple of weeks.

A sunset of orange tints flaring behind the mountains made her remember the letter, and send it to him.

Her mother brought up his reply in a batch of late mail one evening—Muriel had gone to bed rather early, with a slight headache, and she stretched her graceful arms in a yawn at the sight of George Nord's chirography. The gist of his letter made her laugh, and repeat the yawn.

"Is that young Nord again?" Mrs. Fendall was opening her own mail at the desk.

"Yes, mamma," said Muriel. "He has just been married. How suddenly they do it, nowadays!"

"Married?" echoed her mother. "George Nord? Well!"

Muriel's fingers tore the letter into long strips and let them drift away. She propped her pillows behind her head to watch her mother open and cogitate over a sheaf of bills; it was true that if Muriel didn't make the most of her charms before long—!

Her eyes fled to a mirror.

III

MURIEL was somewhere in her thirties when Brice Hathaway came back into her life, with a band of crêpe on his arm—his wife had died, and cut him off without a penny. He was a trifle stouter, but just as handsome.

She ordered tea for two, to be served in the suite of the New York hotel where she was wintering alone—Mrs. Fendall having found it expedient to accept hospitality from a friend of hers rich enough to extend an invitation on a postal-card and exclude from it Mrs. Fendall's beautiful daughter. Muriel was making the best of what was left of Roger F.'s money; it was not difficult for her to dress exquisitely, as she was the type that honoured the smart shops by her patronage, and she managed the problem of delicate food by never having very much appetite, she saw the best plays, heard the operas, read the late books, motored whenever she was inclined to—in short she had become, with the drifting flight of the years, one of those preened, ultra-slim peacocks sometimes glimpsed in the corridors of costly hotels, or of an afternoon on the avenue, or of a morning in some exclusive church.

"How has the world been treating you?" she inquired of the man she had left in the Westchester hills with no more means of locomotion than her tea-basket.

"Not very well, Muriel; it's deeper water than ever."

Hathaway took one of her chairs; he appeared to rest in the chair, though it was gilt and too slight for him.

They talked nothings until the tea-wagon came.

"Tea always reminds me—" She smiled.

He nodded, and gulped. "Doesn't it?" eagerly.

"Of what a fool I was!" she laughed, sighing.

His eyes were on the chased silver teapot.

"You weren't a fool," soberly. "I was the fool, Muriel."

"Maybe so, Brice." She was not inclined to argue it.

They drank their second cup, and their eyes met over the rims of the hotel china.

She exclaimed mirthfully:

"I asked you to live with me in a home in the country where apple trees bloomed! or in a flat up in the Bronx!"

He put down his teacup to say, "That's the way God meant men and women to live—in the country, or close to humanity."

He rose and stood before her. Tides of colour came into his face.

"Muriel"—taking no count of the conventions—"let's be simple, you and I."

Her eyes were on the amber in her cup.

"If only we could!" she sighed.

He spoke precipitantly. "I haven't forgotten— Whenever I've heard of you, drifting, remaining single, sighing away your soul, I've been stung by shame. Oh, Muriel," deeply, "I want to make up for the harm I've done you. Let me work for you with my hands. Dear, leave the happy solution to me. We'll be married, you and I. You and I!"

He was beside her, looking down at her face with an expression that was impetuous and genuine.

There played on her red mouth a curious smile and the eyes she lifted brimmed with delicate mockery.

"You aren't in earnest, are you?" she expostulated.

His answer was to draw her quickly to her feet—masculine hands trembling on her silken shoulder.

"Oh!" was all he said, studying her very lovely, rather wan face.

"Please!" She shrugged from under his hands.

He was abashed; surprised. "Don't you love me, Muriel?"

"I've loved so many men since my first party," she apologized.

She covered what might have been an awkward gap by reaching out and patting his shoulder.

"Forget all about it, like a wise man," she suggested, tenderly.

He stared at the snowflake hand that drifted away so easily.

The colour flared over his face.

"You've changed," he stammered.

Reseating herself before the tea-wagon, she hummed a line from a very old hymn,

"'Change and decay in all around I see!'"

Her lifting hand motioned him to be seated again.

"Do you remember—?" she began. Her manner urged him not to be angry with her. "It isn't feasible, honey; it's only a fairy tale; you wouldn't want me for a lifetime; let's talk about the little house with the wild honeysuckle—do you suppose the well with the moss-grown bucket is still there? I doubt it. I imagine the shanty has fallen to decay."

Hathaway watched her tidy the tea-wagon.

Picking up his hat, he cried, "You're not the woman I thought you! You've changed! Good-bye!"

Muriel was inclined to hang her sheened head, to call after him and beg him not to be angry—but she neither hung her head nor called him.

She only winced as the door banged behind him!

Between drooping white lids, as she sat at the tea-wagon, she saw three pictures: a dusty floor-space set out with tea-things and a handsome countenance flushed with embarrassment; a flock of wild geese against autumnal skies; Sam Montbell's cherubic smile last night at dinner—

She shrouded her eyes, acutely conscious of the flame and glitter of her rings.

Muriel eventually married Sam Montbell—and lived luxuriously ever after. When a woman doesn't wed her first love, her lasting love is so very apt to be m-o-n-e-y.

THE STRATEGIST

By Lawrence Vail

A MONTH had barely passed since he had wrung the memory of Sonia from the sponge of his affections, and Conrad was in love with her again.

"Life is full of surprises," sighed Conrad, "even the expected comes to pass."

"Last time I made love to Sonia," mused Conrad, "I came home with cold lips, tidy hair, and little appetite for life and dinner. I spent a dismal evening in my chair, stitching my sadly mangled vanity. I bear no malice towards Sonia, I alone was to blame for my defeat. I shocked her with a too genuine expression of my too genuine emotion. I carried my heart, so to speak, on my sleeve—no doubt a most indecent spectacle. I should have left it with sundry other skeletons in a corner of my closet.

"I neglected the maxims of Sir Vivian Maude, the wisest of my ancestors, a hero of the Wars of the Roses. If I remember rightly he lost not less than seven battles, was condemned three times to be beheaded, but was saved from death on each occasion by his agreeable manners towards the ladies of the court. 'It would be a drear calamity'—these are the words of the mistress of the Prince—'for England to lose so gay and false a lover. He alone is able to compete on even terms with the skilled and piquant gentlemen of France.'

"I shall never forget the advice he gave on his deathbed to the dearest of his natural sons. 'If you wish to be successful in a skirmish with a cold and fair beloved, leave your heart at home and carry a second brain under your left breast.'"

Conrad was heartened by these recollections.

"It behoves me to be honest with myself. I shall not shirk what is vexatious in my temper; I shall look it fiercely in the face. I love Sonia. I am unable to cure myself of my affection for her. There is only one manner of restoring my sentimental equilibrium. I must insinuate in her my way of feeling."

He studied his calendar and watch.

"It is Tuesday, five minutes after four; I shall go to her immediately. I have not talked or written to her for twenty-seven days. My presence must stir her in some way."

Conrad took his heart from under his left breast, wrapt it carefully in tissue paper, and laid it in the darkest recess of his closet. He then donned his most becoming carelessness, and descended the eighty-eight steps that separated his apartment from the street.

He walked slowly, devising his plan of action.

"To-day I shall make ardent love to her. My voice will be thick with tears, my sentences ungrammatical with despair. I shall gaze at her with hatred; I shall carefully refrain from touching her. She may be astonished, at any rate she will be flattered.

"To-morrow, Wednesday, I shall pursue the same tactics; I shall develop the enamoured strain. She may not be astonished, she may forget to be flattered, I think she will be more than a little bored.

"Thursday I shall be cold, composed

and distant. As soon as she begins to grow curious, I shall be brilliant. I may not amuse her with my fireworks, I shall certainly amuse myself. The afternoon will pass agreeably.

"Friday I shall be more indifferent than cold, more languid than composed. Her vanity, if I am not mistaken, shall be piqued. She will begin to fear that she is losing her empire over me; she will glance often and surreptitiously at the mirror. She will doubtless make an effort to conceal her annoyance: probably talk considerably, recite anecdotes, act the platonic comrade. I hear her telling me with words how fond she is of me, telling me with eyes and hands how indifferent she feels. I shall not touch her hands, I shall not look at her eyes, I may not even listen to her. I shall watch her feet for a movement of irritability, her mouth for a curve of pain.

"Saturday I shall be passionate for seven minutes, for the remainder of the hour I shall sulk. It shall be her day of glory: secure of the power which she holds over me, she will be genuinely gay and happy. When I take my departure she may even grow affectionate through pity for me. She may tell me with a pretty throb that she is light and frivolous, unworthy of my deep affection.

"Sunday I shall blunderingly let her suspect that my unhappiness is not entirely caused by her coldness.

"Monday I shall tell her vaguely that I am in trouble, thus confirming her blackest fears. A hundred trifling incidents will flash through her brain; she will remember how I smiled at other women, how other women smiled at me. It will be her hour of tribulation: I am sure she will acquit herself of it with skill. She will assure me that I have no fonder and more constant friend than she, that she is ready to help me with her sympathy if I choose to confide in her, that she will ask no questions should I prefer to remain silent. I shall disappoint her by turning the topic suddenly. For two hours I shall dissert on politics and economics.

"When I leave her I shall kiss her fingers, thank her for her sympathy and kindness, promise to tell her my troubles on the morrow. But I shall not go to her on Tuesday. I shall send her roses and a letter of apologies. Wednesday I shall send her a postcard from the provinces. Friday I shall receive a letter from her bidding me come to her at once, as there is a question she must ask me, a question of tremendous importance to us both. I shall write to her affectionately, fixing an interview for Monday at five o'clock. I shall go to her on the appointed date, at least thirty minutes after the appointed hour. She will fall into my arms, into my life, like a ripe fruit."

The conclusion of his programme brought Conrad before the door of Sonia's house.

He hesitated before he rang the bell.

"If I pursue this plan," he said to himself, "on Monday, the eleventh of April, at half past five o'clock, Sonia will inevitably fall, like Newton's apple, into my arms and life. It will be very pleasant to hold her in my arms; her body is so soft, and white, and graceful. Her teeth are pretty when she laughs, her curls must be lovely when they tumble. It will undoubtedly be very pleasant to fold her in my arms. But what shall I do with her in my life? I may not love her on the eleventh of April, Monday, at half past five o'clock.

BABES IN THE WOODS

By F. Scott Fitzgerald

SHE paused at the top of the staircase. The emotions of divers on spring-boards, leading ladies on opening nights, and lumpy, be-striped young men on the day of the Big Game, crowded through her. She felt as if she should have descended to a burst of drums or to a discordant blend of gems from "Thaïs" and "Carmen." She had never been so worried about her appearance, she had never been so satisfied with it. She had been sixteen years old for six months.

"Isabelle!" called Elaine, her cousin, from the doorway of the dressing-room.

"I'm ready." She caught a slight lump of nervousness in her throat.

"I've had to send back to the house for another pair of slippers—it'll be just a minute."

Isabelle started toward the dressing-room for a last peek at a mirror, but something decided her to stand there and gaze down the stairs. They curved tantalizingly and she could just catch a glimpse of two pairs of masculine feet in the hall below.

Pump shod in uniform black they gave no hint of identity, but eagerly she wondered if one pair were attached to Stephen Palms. This young man, as yet unmet, had taken up a considerable part of her day—the first day of her arrival.

Going up in a machine from the station Elaine had volunteered, amid a rain of questions and comment, revelation and exaggeration—

"You remember Stephen Palms; well he is simply mad to see you again. He's stayed over a day from college and he's coming to-night. He's heard *so* much about you—"

It had pleased her to know this. It put them on more equal terms, although she was accustomed to stage her own romances with or without a send-off.

But following her delighted tremble of anticipation came a sinking sensation which made her ask:

"How do you mean he's heard about me? What sort of things?"

Elaine smiled—she felt more or less in the capacity of a show-woman with her more exotic cousin.

"He knows you're good-looking and all that." She paused—"I guess he knows you've been kissed."

Isabelle had shuddered a bit under the fur robe. She was accustomed to be followed by this, but it never failed to arouse in her the same feeling of resentment; yet—in a strange town it was an advantage.

She was a "speed," was she? Well, let them find out! She wasn't quite old enough to be sorry nor nearly old enough to be glad.

Out of the window Isabelle watched the high-piled snow glide by in the frosty morning. It was ever so much colder here than in Baltimore, she had not remembered; the glass of the side door was iced and the windows were shirred with snow in the corners.

Her mind played still with one subject: Did *he* dress like that boy there who walked so calmly down what was evidently a bustling business street, in moccasins and winter-carnival costume? How very *western!* Of course he wasn't that way; he went to college, was a freshman or something.

Really she had no distinct idea of

him. A two year back picture had not impressed her except by the big eyes, which he had probably grown up to by now.

However, in the last two weeks, when her Christmas visit to Elaine had been decided on, he had assumed the proportions of a worthy adversary. Children, the most astute of matchmakers, plot and plan quickly, and Elaine had cleverly played a correspondence sonata to Isabelle's excitable temperament. Isabelle was, and had been for some time, capable of very strong, if very transient emotions.

They drew up at a white stone building, set back from the snowy street. Mrs. Hollis greeted her warmly and her various younger cousins were produced from the corners where they skulked politely. Isabelle met them quite tactfully. At her best she allied all with whom she came in contact, except older girls and some women. All the impressions that she made were conscious. The half dozen girls she renewed acquaintance with that morning were all rather impressed—and as much by her direct personality as by her reputation.

Stephen Palms was an open subject of conversation. Evidently he was a bit light of love. He was neither popular nor unpopular. Every girl there seemed to have had an affair with him at some time or other, but no one volunteered any really useful information. He was going to "fall for her." . . .

Elaine had issued that statement to her young set and they were retailing it back to Elaine as fast as they set eyes on Isabelle. Isabelle resolved, that if necessary, she would force herself to like him—she owed it to Elaine—even though she were terribly disappointed. Elaine had painted him in such glowing colours—he was good-looking, had a "line" and was properly inconstant.

In fact, he summed up all the romance that her age and environment led her to desire. Were those his dancing shoes that "shimmied" tentatively around the soft rug below?

All impressions, and in fact all ideas, were terribly kaleidoscopic to Isabelle. She had that curious mixture of the social and artistic temperaments, found so often in two classes, society girls and actresses. Her education, or rather her sophistication, had been absorbed from the boys who had dangled from her favour, her tact was instinctive and her capacity for love affairs was limited only by the number of boys she met. Flirt smiled from her large, black-brown eyes and figured in her intense physical magnetism.

So she waited at the head of the stairs at the Country Club that evening while slippers were fetched. Just as she was getting impatient Elaine came out of the dressing-room beaming with her accustomed good nature and high spirits, and together they descended the broad stairs while the nervous search-light of Isabelle's mind flashed on two ideas. She was glad she had a high colour to-night and she wondered if he danced well.

Downstairs, in the Club's great room, the girls she had met in the afternoon surrounded her for a moment, looking unbelievably changed by the soft yellow light; then she heard Elaine's voice repeating a cycle of names and she found herself bowing to a sextet of black and white and terrible stiff figures.

The name Palms figured somewhere, but she did not place him at first. A confused and very juvenile moment of awkward backings and bumpings, and all found themselves arranged talking to the persons they least desired to.

Isabelle manœuvred herself and Duncan Collard, a freshman from Harvard with whom she had once played hopscotch, to a seat on the stairs. A reference, supposedly humorous, to the past was all she needed.

What Isabelle could do socially with one idea was remarkable. First, she repeated it rapturously in an enthusiastic contralto with a trace of a Southern accent; then she held it off at a distance and smiled at it—her wonderful smile; then she delivered it in variations and played a sort of mental catch with

it, all this in the nominal form of dialogue.

Duncan was fascinated and totally unconscious that this was being done, not for him, but for the eyes that glistened under the shining, carefully watered hair, a little to her left. As an actor even in the fullest flush of his own conscious magnetism gets a lasting impression of most of the people in the front row, so Isabelle sized up Stephen Palms. First, he was light, and from her feeling of disappointment, she knew that she had expected him to be dark and of pencil slenderness. For the rest, a faint flush and a straight romantic profile, the effect set off by a close-fitting dress suit and a silk ruffled shirt of the kind that women still delight in on men, but men were just beginning to get tired of.

Stephen was just quietly smiling.

"Don't *you* think so?" she said suddenly, turning to him innocent eyed.

He nodded and smiled—an expectant, waiting smile.

Then there was a stir and Elaine led the way over to their table.

Stephen struggled to her side and whispered:

"You're my dinner partner—Isabelle."

Isabelle gasped—this was rather right in line. But really she felt as if a good speech had been taken from the star and given to a minor character—she mustn't lose the leadership a bit. The dinner table glittered with laughter at the confusion of getting places and then curious eyes were turned on her, sitting near the head.

She was enjoying this immensely, and Duncan Collard was so engrossed with the added sparkle of her rising colour that he forgot to pull out Elaine's chair and fell into a dim confusion. Stephen was on the other side, full of confidence and vanity, looking at her most consciously. He began directly and so did Duncan.

"I've heard a lot about you since you wore braids—"

"Wasn't it funny this afternoon—" Both stopped.

Isabelle turned to Stephen shyly.

Her face was always enough answer for anyone, but she decided to speak.

"How—who from?"

"From everybody—for all the years since you've been away."

She blushed appropriately.

On her right, Duncan was hors-de-combat already although he hadn't quite realized it.

"I'll tell you what I remembered about you all these years," Stephen continued.

She leaned slightly toward him and looked modestly at the celery before her.

Duncan sighed—he knew Stephen and the situations that Stephen was born to handle. He turned to Elaine and asked her if she was going away to school next year.

II

Isabelle and Stephen were distinctly not innocent, nor were they otherwise. Moreover, amateur standing had very little value in the game they were beginning—they were each playing a part that they might play for years. They had both started with good looks and excitable temperaments, and the rest was the result of certain accessible popular novels, and dressing-room conversation culled from a slightly older set.

When Isabelle's eyes, wide and innocent, proclaimed the ingénue most, Stephen was proportionately less deceived. He waited for the mask to drop off, but at the same time he did not question her right to wear it.

She, on her part, was not impressed by his studied air of blasé sophistication. She had lived in a larger city and had slightly an advantage in range. But she accepted his pose. It was one of a dozen little conventions of this kind of affair. He was aware that he was getting this particular favour now because she had been coached. He knew that he stood for merely the best thing in sight, and that he would have to improve his opportunity before he lost his advantage.

So they proceeded, with an infinite guile that would have horrified the parents of both.

After the half dozen little dinners were over the dance began.

Everything went smoothly—boys cut in on Isabelle every few feet and then squabbled in the corners with: "You might let me get more than an *inch!*" and "She didn't like it either—she told me so next time I cut in."

It was true—she told everyone so, and gave every hand a parting pressure that said, "You know that your dances are *making* my evening."

But time passed, two hours of it, and the less subtle beaux had better learn to focus their pseudo-passionate glances elsewhere, for eleven o'clock found Isabelle and Stephen sitting on a leather lounge in a little den off the reading room. She was conscious that they were a handsome pair and seemed to belong distinctly on this leather lounge while lesser lights fluttered and chattered downstairs. Boys who passed the door looked in enviously—girls who passed only laughed and frowned, and grew wise within themselves.

They had now reached a very definite stage. They had traded ages and accounts of their lives since they had met last. She had listened to much that she had heard before. He was a freshman at college and was on his class hockey team. He had learned that some of the boys she went with in Baltimore were "terrible speeds" and came to parties intoxicated—most of them were twenty or so, and drove alluring Stutzes. A good half of them seemed to have flunked out of various boarding schools and colleges, but some of them bore sporting names that made him look at her admiringly.

As a matter of fact, Isabelle's closer acquaintance with the colleges was chiefly through older cousins. She had bowing acquaintances with a lot of young men who thought she was "a pretty kid" and "worth keeping an eye on." But Isabelle strung the names into a fabrication of gaiety that would have dazzled a Viennese nobleman. Such is the power of young contralto voices on leather sofas.

I have said that they had reached a very definite stage—nay more, a very critical stage. Stephen had stayed over a day to see her and his train left at twelve-eighteen that night. His trunk and suitcase awaited him at the station and his watch was already beginning to hang heavy in his pocket.

"Isabelle," he said suddenly, "I want to tell you something."

They had been talking lightly about "that funny look in her eyes," and on the relative attractions of dancing and sitting out, and Isabelle knew from the change in his manner exactly what was coming—indeed, she had been wondering how soon it would come.

Stephen reached above their heads and turned out the electric light, so they were in the dark except for the glow from the red lamps that fell through the door from the reading-room. Then he began:

"I don't know—I don't know whether or not you know what you—what I'm going to say. Lordy, Isabelle—this sounds like a line, but it isn't."

"I know," said Isabelle softly.

"We may never meet again like this—I have darned hard luck sometimes."

He was leaning away from her on the other arm of the lounge, but she could see his black eyes plainly in the dark.

"You'll see me again—silly." There was just the slightest emphasis on the last word—so that it became almost a term of endearment.

He continued a bit huskily:

"I've fallen for a lot of people—girls—and I guess you have, too—boys, I mean—but honestly you—" He broke off suddenly and leaned forward, chin on his hands, a favourite and studied gesture. "Oh, what's the use? You'll go your way and I suppose I'll go mine."

Silence for a moment. Isabelle was quite stirred—she wound her handkerchief into a tight ball and by the faint light that streamed over her, dropped it deliberately on the floor. Their hands touched for an instant, but neither

spoke. Silences were becoming more frequent and more delicious. Outside another stray couple had come up and were experimenting on the piano in the next room. After the usual preliminary of "chopsticks," one of them started "Babes in the Woods" and a light tenor carried the words into the den—

"Give me your hand,
I'll understand,
We're off to slumberland."

Isabelle hummed it softly and trembled as she felt Stephen's hand close over hers.

"Isabelle," he whispered, "you know I'm mad about you. You *do* give a darn about me?"

"Yes."

"How much do you care—do you like anyone better?"

"No." He could scarcely hear her, although he bent so near that he felt her breath against his cheek.

"Isabelle, I'm going back to college for six long months and why shouldn't we—if I could only just have one thing to remember you by—"

"Close the door."

Her voice had just stirred so that he half wondered whether she had spoken at all.

As he swung the door softly shut, the music seemed quivering just outside.

"Moonlight is bright,
Kiss me good-night."

What a wonderful song, she thought—everything was wonderful to-night, most of all this romantic scene in the den with their hands clinging and the inevitable looming charmingly close.

The future vista of her life seemed an unending succession of scenes like this, under moonlight and pale starlight, and in the backs of warm limousines and in low, cosy roadsters stopped under sheltering trees—only the boy might change, and this one was so nice.

"Isabelle!"

His whisper blended in the music and they seemed to float nearer together.

Her breath came faster.

"Can't I kiss you, Isabelle?"

Lips half parted, she turned her head to him in the dark.

Suddenly the ring of voices, the sound of running footsteps surged toward them.

Like a flash Stephen reached up and turned on the light and when the door opened and three boys, the wrathy and dance-craving Duncan among them, rushed in, he was turning over the magazines on the table, while she sat without moving, serene and unembarrassed, and even greeted them with a welcoming smile. But her heart was beating wildly and she felt somehow as if she had been deprived.

It was evidently over. There was a clamour for a dance, there was a glance that passed between them, on his side despair, on hers regret, and then the evening went on, with the reassured beaux and the eternal cutting in.

At quarter to twelve Stephen shook hands with her gravely, in a small crowd assembled to wish him godspeed.

For an instant he lost his poise and she felt slightly unnecessary, when a satirical voice from a concealed wit on the edge of the company cried:

"Take her outside, Stephen."

As he took her hand he pressed it a little and she returned the pressure as she had done to twenty hands that evening—that was all.

At two o'clock, back at Hollis', Elaine asked her if she and Stephen had had a "time" in the den. Isabelle turned to her quietly. In her eyes was the light of the idealist, the inviolate dreamer of Joan-like dreams.

"No!" she answered. "I don't do that sort of thing any more—he asked me to, but I said 'No.'"

As she crept into bed she wondered what he'd say in his special delivery tomorrow. He had such a good-looking mouth—would she ever—?

"Fourteen angels were watching o'er them," sang Elaine sleepily from the next room.

"Damn!" muttered Isabelle as she explored the cold sheets cautiously, "Damn!"

THE DAMNED

By Kathryn White Ryan

THEY said of him: "Poor fellow! He deserved what he got, but then!—Divorce, obloquy, exile, obliteration!—Life must be hell for him now. After all his splendour, his successes!"

But he, strolling by day along unshadowed shores, the ocean and sky his companions, would murmur: "Ah, how good! How good! The reprieve of this quiet epilogue! They think they blighted me, but they have given me a dispensation, a mental luxury few mortals have known. . . . The others—they strive and wrangle and act to the last, but now for years I have lived without the disturbance, without the discord, without the dismay of action. . . . I have Life—clear, un-used Life—free of decisions, of responsibilities."

And at night, the sea crooning, and palms like soothing hands rubbing along the walls; with nerves slackened, the buzz of the machinery of the world stilled, candles flickering, a man-servant bearing away the silver coffee-tray, he would bask in memories. He would listen to misty voices of obsequious men; he would feel shadow-touches of velvet arms. He would think: "How truly successful I was! What does it matter to have failed? Failure was accomplished in a day, but there was a lifetime of success before it. Besides, Failure was the one sensation I had not known—and, and—Failure is very interesting!"

I AM HOUSED AND WARM

By Mary Carolyn Davies

I AM housed and warm.
But out beyond, my lover
Is in the wind and cold,
And stars are his cover.

He sleeps alone, his arm
Beneath his head. And I
Lie in this quiet room
Watching my life go by.

AN ENGAGED GIRL

By Thyra Samter Winslow

SHE was a little thing, with soft brown hair that fell in seeming carelessness too near her eyes. She was always brushing it back with a quaint, helpless, half-embarrassed little smile. She wore her hair low because her forehead was high, and it made her look ten years older to show it. She had a way of smiling, as if exceedingly interested, and she could listen quite well, never interrupting, but punctuating the conversation at the right times with eager little nods.

She was slender, with thin shoulders, quite fragile-looking. She had a way of standing very close to the person she was with and shrugging one shoulder rather sensuously—she could make the movement seem unconscious. She wore rather thin Georgette waists, usually, over fancy pink silk camisoles, trimmed with lace and bits of ribbon. She used cheap perfume rather sparingly and was not very careful about her shoes—her foot was small and she wore French-heeled affairs of inexpensive leather that always looked a bit grey.

She left the Subway station at Times Square and hurried to keep her appointment with Eric Black. The only times she ever hurried were when she went to keep appointments with men, and even then she was always late, spending too much time musing or miscalculating the time it would take her to get ready.

She had been "going with" Eric for about six months and they had been engaged nearly that long. She saw to that. She was just twenty, but she had been "engaged" twice before, first to Fred Howard, with whom she had quarrelled—she had got tired of him before the quarrel—then to Joe Benham, who proved too stingy to show a girl a good time.

Milly liked being engaged. One of her codes was that the right sort of girl doesn't let a man kiss her until they are engaged. She was very careful that men should "respect" her and think her "a lady." She often told them so. She would introduce into her conversation such things as "But I didn't answer her, I tried to be a lady," and "It doesn't seem to me a lady would do that."

She lived in a little apartment with her father and mother and three younger brothers in One Hundred and Thirty-first Street. Her father and all of her brothers held various insignificant positions and received sufficiently large salaries to support the family in a meagre sort of comfort. Her mother was a decent, though untidy, housekeeper.

Milly thought herself above the class of girls who "had to work," though she had thought, a number of times, of going on the stage—or in the movies. There was really nothing useful she was capable of doing and she hadn't quite enough ambition or energy to pursue her fancies concerning a career.

Now she adjusted her small, rather trim hat pulling it a bit further over her eyes. Still hurrying up the street she took from her large gaudily beaded purse a small silver-plated puff-box, rearranged a strand of hair, powdered her nose. Eric had never seen her without her nose being quite powdery. To have suggested it would have seemed, to Milly, an indiscretion.

She was awfully fond of Eric, quite in love with him, in fact, more than she had ever been in love with Fred or Joe. In her mind she had planned their mar-

riage a hundred times. She intended to see that it took place soon now. She hated long engagements. Anything might happen. She liked Eric. He fitted into her scheme—dependable, affectionate, plain, understandable. He was good-looking, too. He knew how to spend money, though he was apt to get stingy spells, once in a while, and talk about saving up.

Oh, well, maybe that was all right. When they were married it would be good to know he was the saving, domestic sort, not one who would "hold out on her." She liked to know how much money the man she was going with made and what his prospects were. It was quite time she was getting married, settling down—she was still young—could get lots of fellows, of course—but three girls she had gone with were married—no use waiting too long. . . .

Eric was getting forty dollars a week and now that his younger brother was working he didn't have to help his mother and could leave home. She certainly wouldn't have married him and lived with his mother—a funny old lady. Imagine living with a funny old lady who would always be asking questions and maybe say something if you used rouge—and you'd have to help her with the housework and be neat and orderly about things . . .

Now Eric could get away from his mother all right. He'd told her that. Forty dollars was enough money to get along with, to start—she wished she knew men who were making more—a lot of money, not just a salary. . . . Still, if Eric got a raise that would show that he was going in the right direction—he was awfully good-looking—she knew other girls envied her.

She reached the drug store at Broadway and Forty-third Street, where she was to have met Eric at half-past six, at a minute or two past seven. She saw him standing in front of the drug store, near the door, watching for her. He hurried toward her.

"Hel-lo," she called, sprightly, holding out her hand to him. "Now don't be a baddy and scold me for being late. I hurried and hurried and hurried. I just missed one car and there was a block in the Subway that lasted over ten minutes. I'm not so dreadfully late."

She held up her wrist for him to see—he had given her the wrist watch on her birthday.

She noticed, then, that Eric looked different—pleasantly excited.

"What's the matter?" she asked, hurriedly.

He looked down at her affectionately. He was a big fellow, rather heavily built, with thick eyebrows and quite a firm chin.

"Something good. Guess?"

"How can I guess? A raise? Did you get a raise, Eric?"

She patted her hands together, in simulated excitement. "Did you? Is that it?"

"Not quite. Pretty nearly though. Let's get out of this crowd and get something to eat."

With one arm at her elbow he piloted her through the group waiting at the drug store.

"What do you say to Goletti's? Feel like sphagetti to-night, Milly?"

"That sounds great, only hurry up and tell me. I'm so excited."

"Lots of time."

He piloted her up Broadway, holding her arm close. They became part of the colourful, flowing crowd. Goletti's was in Forty-seventh Street.

Then:

"Say, Milly, how'd you like to live in Kansas City?"

"Kansas City! What a funny question! Why?"

Milly had been out of New York only twice and neither trip had pierced west of the seemingly impassable Palisades. New York, she felt, was the world. Weren't all newspapers in New York, weren't all magazines in New York—and theatres and cafés? Did anyone go outside of New York but travelling men and road shows? Away from New York people lived in little hick towns, or fairly big hick towns, and didn't know what was going on at

all. Why, if you lived outside of New York you were a rube and wore funny clothes and looked up at the tall buildings when you came to town and they made jokes about you at the Palace.

"Why? What did you ask about Kansas City for?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing," Eric smiled, held her a bit closer, "nothing, only, well, I'm—I'm going there — Monday — Monday morning—assistant branch manager. There were a lot of changes at the office to-day, and Kansas City needs an assistant and I understand the business—ought to, when you start in a place when you're fourteen, and so when . . ."

"Will it mean more money?"

"They didn't say anything about that to-day and of course I didn't ask. Not right away, I guess, but if I make good there's not a question. Of course I'll get more, then. Why, some of the men in our branches are making four thousand a year. There's Cabell in Denver . . ."

Milly smiled and nodded at the right times. Kansas City—and all of her friends lived in New York—Kansas City, a little Western town—why, maybe it wasn't even—modern! Of course they didn't have apartments there—you'd probably have to live in a whole house and take care of it and heat water in a kettle—lots of housework—and all of her dreams had been of New York.

Still—it might be pleasant, getting married right away—a lot of excitement and buying clothes. Under the circumstances, she could even let Eric help pay for the trousseau, it wasn't quite "ladylike," but she didn't have much money saved and everything was so high. But, at that, her father usually had a little put away and her mother was always able to keep out something from the household fund that Milly could manage to get when she tried. Under the circumstances . . . yes, her money and from her father and mother and the boys and Eric—and Uncle Lou and Aunt Sophie might give her money for clothes instead of a regular wedding present—she might get fixed up all right—a pretty suit for travelling and some waists and a couple of good-looking dresses to wear in the evening—and hats. You probably couldn't get a thing worth wearing in Kansas City—she'd show them how to dress—they'd know she was a New Yorker out there as soon as they saw her, of course, and look to her to tell them what was new in New York, all about styles . . .

II

They reached Goletti's and found a table near the wall, one of twenty little tables just alike, ornamented with catsup and catsup stains, salt that wouldn't shake at all, and pepper that shook too freely, when there was any in the shaker, a glass jar of soft green pieces called pickles, damp, unstarched napkins.

There was a "good crowd" in Goletti's, as always, the tables full of the oddly assorted couples one sees in a seventy-five cent table d'hôte restaurant, varied with little groups of four, eagerly crunching their food and speaking above the clatter of the dishes in the hoarse, unnatural tones of the cheap restaurant frequenter. Milly and Eric were soon eating their soup, a thick substance, full of pieces of tomato, Italian paste and beans.

Eric finished his story and Milly gathered together the ends of it.

". . . so, when the boss said, 'Black; the job's yours, if you can make good, you can imagine how glad I was. It's a big thing for me. Why, if I make good, in a year or two . . ."

After all, getting married quickly, telling everybody good-bye, a reception, maybe, the excitement of getting new clothes, of travelling, mightn't be such a bad thing after all. Even Kansas City for a while—the wife of the assistant manager . . .

"Will you have to stay out there, all the time?" she asked.

"Why, I suppose so. That's the plan. I might work up to be manager, though, in time, and they say Kansas City is a crackjack town. I'll be kind of glad to get out of this—subway rides

twice a day and all the noise and everything. I can get farther ahead out there, and they say you can live cheaper, too, and Mr. Lefton said, after I was there a while . . ."

"You're really going?"

"Surest thing you know. Leave Monday."

"Monday! Why, Eric!!" Milly looked up, softly smiling, brushed her hair away from her face, dropped her eyes. "That's the part I don't like—Monday's so near. Just think, to-day's Friday and nearly over, only Saturday and Sunday left."

"Well, that's long enough for me to get ready—and say good-bye. And pretty soon, not very long, either, I'll—I'll come and get you or send for you, Milly. Would you come out there, way out to Kansas City to marry me?"

"But—but, Eric, I'd be so awfully lonely here alone. I—I tell you what would be great. Why—" she burst into a sudden smile as if she had just thought of it, "wouldn't it be perfectly splendid, wonderful—if—if we could get married right away, to-morrow or Monday—and go to Kansas City on our honeymoon! I could get the few things I need to wear, to-morrow—and then we needn't be separated at all. A new man, when he's married, gets a lot more respect from girls in the office, people like that . . ."

She put one hand across the table, withdrew it a little, as if hesitating.

Eric put his hand over hers, patted it. "It sounds great, girlie. Nothing I'd like better, but I'm afraid it can't be done."

"I'd like to know why not?"

"I've got to make good first, honey. Don't you see? It's better that way. To-day, when the boss asked me if I was married, I told him about you, us being engaged, and he said, 'Just as well, no social stunts till you get broken in.' There'll be a lot of night work there, for a while—they are overworked now, that's why they are adding an assistant—and alone, in a strange town in the evening wouldn't be any fun for you. After a while, when I'm making good—and you can just bet I will make good with a girl like you to work for—"

"When you're making good? How long?"

A sudden change came over Milly. Unconsciously she withdrew her hand, let it lay idle in her lap.

"Why, not long, within a year, sure. Maybe six months, even—if things went all right. Say, wouldn't I feel like a fool, marrying a girl and taking her away from her home to a strange city and then not make good. . . . Say, I'd never get over that, in the world. But you just wait. Six months will pass in no time and then . . ."

Six months!

By his voice Milly knew that he meant it. She knew Eric pretty well. She knew what heavy eyebrows and a firm mouth and a determined chin meant. Too often, he'd made up his mind about things—and never changed.

She knew that he cared for her but that he wouldn't give in—give up going to Kansas City or marry her right away. Sometimes she could "work" him into altering his opinions, with little coaxings, but not when he stuck out his jaw, looked like that . . .

Six months . . . six months of being alone in New York . . . waiting . . . writing letters—Milly hated letter writing—staying home in the evening . . . Since she was seventeen, Milly had never been without masculine escorts. A desert of six months with no engagements of cafés. . . .

Milly knew there were girls who didn't "go with" boys. She could picture them, lank, stupid creatures, always in silly little groups with little jokes among themselves. No, Milly couldn't go with girls—she never could. She couldn't spend six months longer, unescorted, waiting. She'd be engaged and an engaged girl doesn't go with other men—her code included being loyal to a man as long as you consider yourself engaged to him. And, at the end of six months, even, maybe Eric wouldn't be ready to send for her or wouldn't succeed. Eric was stubborn. He'd probably get worse as he grew

older. Kansas City—a rube town—waiting to go there—six months of waiting. . . .

Then, suddenly, Milly knew that she would never marry Eric. She knew that all of her dreams of him for the past six months, when she had mused on their marriage, their affection, were gone. At once, she felt definitely unengaged.

Looking at Eric, across the table, with her sweetest smile, her head a bit on one side, she knew that he meant absolutely nothing to her any more. He was a stranger as far as emotions went. She knew that, after Monday, she would probably never see him again or care to see him again. She was absolutely uninterested in him.

She would be nice to him, of course. That would be the simplest, the ladylike thing to do. She would see him tomorrow and Sunday and let him talk about their—his—plans. And Monday morning she'd probably go down to the station to tell him good-bye—it would be the nice way to act—she'd take him a present, a cigarette case, maybe, or some cuff links—she'd seen some good-looking gold-plated ones in a window—and she'd write to him, at first, and then gradually break off—that would be simple enough. The days she and Eric had spent together, his kindnesses to her, the memories, caresses were wiped off, clean. The man across the table was no one she knew or cared for at all.

". . . so you see it's best," Eric was continuing, painstakingly. "I'll go up there and work hard and get the lay of the land, and, by the time you're ready to come, I'll be settled and know all about things. Then, if I can get a vacation, I'll come up for you, and, if not, maybe you can come out there to me . . . anyhow, it'll all work out all right. And I can live pretty cheap out there alone and save money—and by the time . . ."

Milly gave her quick, eager little nods, smiling in pleasant agreement. She even found his hand under the table and gave it a little, quick squeeze. Now that this affair was over—what next?

They ate spaghetti, then, and the typical tasteless dry chicken of the table d'hôte restaurant, punctuating the meal with laughter and pleasant planning.

A man came into the restaurant. He was good-looking. Not Eric's type, but good-looking, anyhow—Milly only liked good-looking men. She had been quite constant to Eric and had not flirted or even looked at other men while she had been engaged to him. It was not "ladylike" to flirt with one man when you're engaged to another. But now things were different, of course.

Eric saw the new man, too, and nodded to him. And, as Milly saw that Eric knew him, that there was a chance for an introduction, her heart gave a sudden thrill—she became a hunter at a new chase—her mind leaped ahead—a meeting, cafés—theatres—someone to go with—an engagement—caresses—marriage, even. Milly gave the stranger a long glance out of the corners of her eyes, then dropped them modestly.

"Who is that?" asked Milly, so that the stranger could see she was interested, asking about him.

"Fellow named Hood, nice fellow. He's with that new vacuum company that the Walls are interested in."

Milly glanced at the stranger again, frankly, pleasantly, unsmiling.

"Why, for a minute I thought it was—why, he looks just exactly like a man I used to know—I never saw two people look so much alike. Hood, did you say his name was? Well, then of course it can't be the same man. Only I thought . . ."

Hood was approaching them. Goletti's was quite crowded. There were no vacant tables.

Milly smiled kindly.

"Why not ask him to come here, Eric," she said. "The poor fellow will get no dinner here if you don't. This awful mob. We're nearly through, anyhow."

It was a kind thing for Milly to suggest, of course. She was thoughtful. It was one of Eric's last evenings with

her and he didn't want it interfered with. Still, as Milly had said, they had nearly finished, would be going . . . He motioned to Hood to join them.

Milly acknowledged the introduction with a pleasant little laugh. She moved imperceptibly nearer Hood, as he sat down, and began teasing him in a personal, though ladylike, way about arriving so late for his dinner.

"It's a good thing you've no wife waiting for you here. Do you come to dinner at home, late, too—treat your wife this way?"

"I'm unfortunate enough not to be married," Hood told her.

Well, she knew that. She didn't like married men. It wasn't quite nice to go with them and they offered no matrimonial opportunities. Yes, he was good-looking. She liked that slender light type more than men like Eric. He woudn't be so stubborn. He wore nice clothes and had nice finger nails. She liked his eyes, too, a funny grey. She bet he knew a lot about things—he wasn't the sort who would move to a rube town like Kansas City.

Hood told some trivial experiences of the day and Milly laughed appreciatively and nodded eagerly at well-punctuated intervals. She discovered half a dozen similarities in tastes and told him so. She shrugged the shoulder nearest him so he couldn't help seeing the alluring flesh and bits of pink ribbon under the thin waist.

Yes, Hood was a nice fellow—she knew that type—you had to humour them—they were rather brusque, the way they talked, but, when you learned how to handle them—

Milly and Eric rose to go. Milly leaned quite near Hood as she stood up. She swayed slightly as Eric helped her on with her coat, smiled, and held out a soft little hand as she said goodbye.

Eric walked ahead, to pay the cheque —you pay the cashier at Goletti's.

"Wait a minute," Hood called softly.

Milly had been listening for a word from him.

She turned back.

He did not rise. She did not expect it.

He leaned back in his seat.

"Your friend Black anything to you?" he asked.

"What do you mean, anything?" smiling.

"You're not his girl? Not engaged?"

"Why of course not! Just a friend. He's leaving town in a few days."

"So I heard him say. Only, I thought maybe, from something else he said—You don't mind if I 'phone you or something?"

"I wish you would. Awfully glad to have you." She gave him her telephone number and moved away. Eric was waiting at the cashier's desk, one man still ahead of him.

"What's your hurry?" Hood called, in his quiet, rather high voice.

"Nothing. Why?"

"Why not say now when I'm going to see you?"

"When would you like to see me?"

"Say, what about having dinner with me, here, in a day or two?"

"That would be awfully nice." Quietly, demurely.

"What night?"

"Monday? All right, I'll meet you here at half-past six. That satisfy you?"

They nodded and Milly hurried to Eric, who was just paying the cheque.

"I hated to stand around here, being jostled by waiters and everybody, so I went back to our table," Milly explained.

Eric had not noticed her absence. He guided her, by the elbow, carefully, as they went out on the street.

". . . as I was telling you," he said, "it was the greatest surprise of my life when the boss called me in. You can imagine how I felt. I can see what a big chance it is. It'll mean a lot to both of us. And you just wait—it won't seem so long—in six months or so I'll send for you—and now, we'll have one good time until I leave on Monday . . ."

Milly encouraged him with her mechanical, sweet, little smiles and nods.

. . . Monday . . .

MY LOVES: THEIR GREATNESS AND DECLINE

By June Gibson

I

Gregory

ONLY the big things mattered to Gregory. If a woman expressed a desire for a bit of Chinese porcelain, Gregory did not scour the local bazaars for it: he journeyed to the Orient. In comparison with his own, the feasts of Crœsus would have offended him by their meagreness. Petty business ventures were unknown to Gregory; he speculated with millions. He had faced shambles and murder and jungle beasts and malady unflinchingly and unhaunted by fear. One night when curtains of rain shut off one street from another, he lifted me to his lips.

"I defy the laws of men. My will is omnipotent. To-night I shall take you away with me," he said . . . and I fell in love with Gregory.

We hastened through the wet dark. Suddenly Gregory halted.

"We will have to go back," he said. "I have forgotten my rubbers" . . . and I fell out of love with Gregory.

II

Bill

THE lounge type wearied me. Among them was not one "man's man." I considered the injustice of things. Though environment removed him from my sphere, was it not possible that a real man, a man who could arouse primitive passion in me, roved the slums? I determined to seek him out. I found Bill. Bill's hair was shaggy, his fists were knotted, and over one eye was a black patch.

"I want you to go straight . . . for my sake," I whispered.

"I know there's a Heaven, Lady, because you're an Angel," he said . . . and I fell in love with Bill.

When I reached home, I found that my diamond brooch, my opal necklace and my pocketbook were gone . . . and I fell out of love with Bill.

III

Allan

ALLAN was very young, fresh from his father's farm. A moustache in embryo crested his upper lip and he was as awkward as a duckling. Throughout the evening the sight of me was the end of his guileless gazings. I encouraged him with my eyes of starless night. As he approached the thumping of his heart seemed as audible as the clinking of narrow-pronged forks against oyster shells . . . and I fell in love with Allan.

"Why did you seek me?" I murmured, slant-eyed.

"Because you remind me of my Mother," he replied simply . . . and I fell out of love with Allen.

IV

Claudius

CONVENTION and Mrs. Grundy disgruntled me. I felt that mundane things were shrivelling my Soul. I

longed for the expansion of my Soul, its amelioration. I came upon Claudius, outstretched upon a haystack.

"This hayrick expresses my Soul," he said. "Teeming with sunshine, field-fragrant, the rendezvous of butterflies. The sky is an expression of your Soul—now turquoise and tranquil, now mystic with pendant clouds" . . . and I fell in love with Claudius.

As I scaled the haycock to join Claudius in further discussion of our Souls, a keeper in the uniform of a local lunatic asylum approached. As he led Claudius away he tapped his head and indicated his charge with a knowing smile . . . and I fell out of love with Claudius.

V

Jacques

I CONSIDERED Jacques my mate, destined to become mine since Eternity. Huddled together in the gloom, we drank warm wine from the same bowl and discussed affinities. Jacques stroked my throat with his fingers and said:

"You are a part of me. Since I found you I have become complete" . . . and I fell in love with Jacques.

The intensity of my love for Jacques made me ill, and it was a month before I saw him again.

"Have I met you before?" he asked. "You look a bit familiar" . . . and I fell out of love with Jacques.

BACK TO EDEN

By Dennison Varr

THEY found him wandering around in a dazed condition, bearing the earmarks of a vigorous quarrel, a blackened eye, bleeding nose and a gap in his front teeth.

Filled with pity they seized him by the arms.

"Come, old chap," they said. "Let us take you home to your wife."

He groaned piteously.

"Don't you understand?" he murmured feebly.

WHEN a man hears his wife praised by another man he feels elated. When a woman hears her husband praised by another woman she gets suspicious.

INEXPLICABLE

By N. G. Caylor

ALL evening her eyes had laughed into his with senseless laughter. Now, as she attempted to back out of the door of the little candy shop, and found it locked, she stopped, facing him, and flung back her head in an abandon of silent merriment.

Her lips were a joyous red arch; above her uptilted nose her eyes shone upward in fixed rapture; her dark, curved eyebrows pointed delicately down into the outlines that separated the glowing light of her face from the surrounding darkness.

Stanley Reed's eyes held the picture for a moment.

"Pretty—but meaningless as a poster," he told himself cynically.

They re-entered the candy shop that had become deserted while they had lingered at the table, and walked the tiled floor to another entrance. Reed found himself a bit ashamed of his presence in the prim black-and-white place, with its bows and bonbon boxes in elaborate display cases—"a fit place for the amours of High School gadabouts."

Once outside, as they broke into a quick stride, she still looked at him with almost questioning gaiety.

"Good Lord, she must know she has some expression on her face! People don't look like that without some intention," he thought.

"Put on your hat," he commanded gruffly.

Her coquetting eyes went to his as to a mirror as she crammed the hat over her hair, with its Roman gold sheen, its ridiculous suggestion of seeming bobbed, and the still more ridiculous bangs—"artfully artless."

"Just like a blamed movie actress," he characterized her gesture.

She thrust her hands into the pockets of her slim blue coat, and walked thoughtfully beside him.

"Gathering a new mood," he thought. "When she turns to me again she'll be sad—or something."

He was thankful that for the time she kept her eyes from him. His irritability began to slip from him as they walked two silent blocks, soft, dark, with ringing white sidewalks.

After all, why did he seek her out if he did not enjoy being with her? He wondered what his feeling toward her was. Just now he thought he would like to clutch the sleeves of the boyish coat and shake the girl thoroughly, tweaking her about. She was just the right size for that—"cute" many would call her. But in this and the appropriateness to a shaking, there were many who could outshine her.

Numerous candy-counter girls, ingénues also in their way, occurred to him, bits of blonde, high-heeled slimness. Thank goodness, at least she wasn't high-heeled. She was boyish.

Yet there had been that girl in the Morals Court the week before, boyish to a detail rocking back and forth on slim, defiant legs, feet planted apart, flat-heeled. Her little chin had been thrust forward shrewdly and belligerently as she listened, her thin lips moved in a mocking undulation, cool as her eyes, when the judge said:

"Six months in the House of Correction!"

As a study in boyishness, she far surpassed Bernardine, whose rounded features made her resemble many types, never distinct enough to suggest one image, finely chiselled, he thought.

"May I come in?" her sweet, somewhat flat, voice sounded.

She pushed a little ungloved hand, cold he knew, and somewhat hard, into the crook of his arm.

"Now she's wistful," he grimaced, thinking of her slightly nasal tone.

He reverted to his previous thoughts. "No, there is nothing unique about her—"

He looked at her and was surprised to find no trace of the wistfulness his cynicism suggested. There was only pleasure in the perfect little face, artless gladness.

Quickly her eyes responded to his. She opened her lips in a sounded exhalation, half gasp and half unvibrating laughter—an unsophisticated sound.

Despite the fact that her hand was heavy on his arm, she seemed to be walking alone, to be laughing alone. "For all her intelligence, she's not as companionable as a ticket-seller in a movie theatre—"

He listened to her joyous little gasp and saw her suddenly shut her lids on the little dancing beams of light that laughed out of her eyes.

"You'd expect her to gurgle next, like a child in a tub."

Was it by such tricks that she expected to interest him! Did she want to interest him? Or was she *really* happy?

Looking into her eyes, open now again, with their still response, he smiled. There was charm in their unresisting glow. . . .

But he knew that another moment of that constant joy in her face would annoy him. Again he would question the meaningless eagerness of the eyes, full of golden lights.

Even this business of putting her arm in his! Her soft voice, pleading. Not legitimate weapons for a niggard. Still, her advances were somehow impersonal. Her laugh, for instance. The joy, radiating toward him, did not touch. Her eyes seemed to laugh into the atmosphere about him. Even the most intimate of glances was spent before it reached him.

She was a child. "Hell—fine amusement, dancing kids around to ice-cream parlours—"

But she was a sophisticated infant—brimming with phrases aptly acquired, an ingenuousness too persistent and too intricate to be unconscious. Sometimes she came out with some pert finality, succinct, well-phrased, discerning. He was sorry that on such occasions he knew the expression to be filched. He cast about in his mind for its author among her circle of acquaintances.

Her ingenuous manner was her guard against further questioning. She seemed to say, proudly, "That was pretty good, wasn't it? Please—I am not capable of more just now."

At times there was even a defensive frankness in her joy at her aptness, which said, "Of course, we both know I didn't think of that remark, but don't stop my fun."

With a tenderness he felt to be foolish, he even refrained from the easy revenge of questioning her about the authors of whom she spoke—he might hurt her.

Yet her blatant assertiveness often hurt him.

He was hurt when by some serious remark he tacitly admitted her to his plane, only to be startled by her flippant arraignment of his idols. One couldn't argue with her, but the feeling of shame was there. To have exhibited one's idols before this arrogant idiot.

"Verlaine—"

"He's decadent—"

"But that's no fault—if to be sensitive—"

"Morbid!"

"Prokofieff's music—"

"Brass-band stuff!"

"Lime-house Nights"—

"Cheap, sensational!"

"Whitman—"

"Give *me* Billy Sunday!"

These remarks, scattered lightly, irreligiously, accompanied by gestures that not only dismissed the subject but removed her from the conversation, he remembered. Now that they recurred to him, he was disgusted with himself.

Plainly, there was no basis for an infatuation with her—if infatuation there was. A cheap little liar—she couldn't impress him with her fake accomplishments. If knowledge implied understanding, she was a numskull.

With a thorough and characteristic lack of perception, she had even managed, in hit or miss style, to offend his æstheticism by vapid remarks about the uselessness of art.

"The only thing necessary to-day is economic readjustment," she once said with a glittering air of discovery—"a Little Jack Horner expression," Reed called it.

"Idiot! At least she is consistent. There's nothing in *her* worthy of assailment. A living ellipsis—reminder of omissions."

Had he ever really heard her say anything necessary, convincing?

She was comical, insincere, at best a chameleon flaunting vicarious colours playfully.

"Please speak to me—" her voice came plaintively.

Intrigue. He would teach her. "Parasite!"

"I have had a terribly silly mood coming on," she said with her soft laugh, for which her lips uplifted whimsically.

"You're walking pigeon-toed," he commented dryly.

Her footsteps lagged, and her hand dragged on his arm.

"It's because you're pushing me off the sidewalk," she complained.

He moved away.

"I'm not going to hold on to you for ever." Her voice trickled into the little hoarse gasp.

With her arms tight against her, hands in pockets, she danced forward on her light feet, drifting zigzaggedly forward.

Then she turned.

"Hold on to me," she shrilled merrily, "or I'll clown!"

"Damn unintelligent!" He was surprised to hear that he had really voiced the words.

For a moment she was still.

Then her eyes mocked at him again.

"Me? and intelligence?" Her voice was a shrill whisper.

Suddenly he slipped an arm about her bouncing shoulder. That was the way to subdue her.

"But good Lord, why should I?" he questioned himself. "She probably wants me to."

She stayed within his arm. As they walked the silent streets his gesture became a conscious embrace. His heart pounded high in his throat; he felt afraid to breathe.

Her free arm tore the hat from her soft hair, luminous even in the night. His arm about her tightened. And now, as they moved rhythmically along the dark street, her golden head was almost on his shoulder, her face, with its rapt joy, turned up to the sky.

"There is spray in the air—feel!" she said.

They had neared the lake. The air was misted, poignant with a sharp spray. He had not been conscious of it until she had spoken.

He was filled with bitterness at himself. In its revelation, he and the girl were trifling—rather, he had come to her trifling level. That he, an artist, should walk on this powerful night with this little fool, and that she should drown out the night—

"The laughing simp—"

But he could not drop the arm encircling her. It was pleasant—walking slowly into the sharp lake wind.

He did not want to look at her, fearing greater disillusionment than that upon which his strange mood hovered. He was nervously aware of her clamouring joyousness, of her deadly calculated abandon. Her joy, he felt, was cold, translated into sound, it would blow like a tuba, even and loud, without a scintillation in it.

Years before, when he had differentiated men and women by assuming that the charm of women was the indication of numberless subtleties unknown to man, he had dreamed of a woman with moods as tremulous as the sounds of a violin. Well, there were none. He

knew much of many lacks, the shrill shriek of the flute, the thin vibration of the piccolo, and the hollow beat of drums whose boom had promised depth.

She moved beneath his clutching arm. Suddenly uncomfortable in his embrace, she reminded him of her dominance.

"Silly—" her laughing lips framed. And *she* was blotting out the night.

Their steps reached the shore. He released her so suddenly, that he felt her stumble to regain her balance. He turned away and clenched his hands as he stared into the night.

Like a suppliant, he yearned for it to move him. He ached for its cleansing magic, the sharp invigoration that had touched him many times before. And yet he was conscious that he read, rather than sensed, its appeal; like a connoisseur he judged the night to be superlatively beautiful.

The spray, beating in tiny particles, began to torture his face. He was conscious of waiting for something, of being in the night passingly, a stranger.

His trained eyes sought the glimmering red light in the distance whose wavering pulse should have been a mystic key to the night whose glamour he could not absorb. Words came—

"Electric blue—both sky and lake—drifting toward the land in thin white rifts—"

He could have laughed at his impotence.

"Like a blamed litterateur—"

And now, just as there were moments in which he was aware of his greatness, when the noise of the world outside his window was a purposeless buzzing before the pulse of his genius, so in this moment he felt petty, akin to all he despised, the trifling, the shallow, the insincere.

He even felt immature, dipping in the effervescent stimulation of the night in callow manner, needful of another with whom to share his piffling mood. And the other—a silly flapper, probably eager for the sentimental pot-pourri of caresses, puppy-love verbiage, all the idiotic mess of summer-night romancing.

He was suddenly devoid of mood, like a man staring indeterminately into the morning upon emerging from his house.

He felt a choking sensation. But it was not night and sky and sea coming toward him. He wanted to look at the girl.

"Giggle as she does into the face of the night, that's what I ought to do. . . . Destructive little counterfeit—coquette—with false gladness—"

The night, coming toward him, taunted with defiant elusiveness. Over there just beyond his glance, stood the girl.

"Trickster—!"

In the candy shop, she had lifted a sugar-powdered strawberry from its pedestal of ice-cream and had flopped it into her childish mouth with a silly look of wonder and exploration. Her childish mouth—yet charming. . . . The whimsicality of her eyes. . . . "Correct" she had called him, looking at him—so—

The power of her vague, sudden expressions! Dark eyes, mischievous beneath uplifted eyebrows, drifting through vagueness into another mood, effervescent, unfathomable—

The image faded before the drifting, argent night . . .

And now, he was looking with jaded eyes into it. He felt sorry for himself that he could not rise to its emotion. Perhaps he would never rise to such nights again. Perhaps his was the paltry sphere, his glimpses into the heights lucky, his dreams mirages of self-intoxication.

So he dropped into the commonplace. He saw, as his, the sleepy over-laden jog along a dusty road, instead of the fire-breathing dash he had dreamed. Perhaps he would marry one as incapable of dreams as he. At the moment such a marriage seemed possible.

He was moved to trifle with the paltry occasion, to taste its slender range of pleasure.

The resolution seemed a familiar one, one of many, many disappointments he was suddenly aware of—vague, old—old—

This girl, too, who had caught his passing interest, only to fail—

When he turned, he stood, for a moment, silent before the picture.

Her slim figure silhouetted against the luminous night, she was a study in blues, with something of the electric brilliance of the night and its soft smudges of shadow, her hair a pale, quivering aura.

As he touched her, she was like chiselled stone, the life in her imperceptible except that she seemed to breathe together with the night—

He had a glimpse of her pale blue face, glistening eyes, her mouth a little crooked circle of wonder and terror as she stared before her. . . .

He wanted to stop. But in a lightning moment he caught her to him. He became aware that she was whimpering as she averted her face from his kisses, trivial, searching.

With a sob, she wrenched away from him.

"Used me like a prop—in this wonderful night," her voice, suddenly robbed of its nuances, snapped.

He followed her stumbling steps up the beach.

Good Lord—how mistaken he had been! The woman, capable of feeling great moments, of whom he had despaired—

So she had felt the night. Again he saw the little crooked mouth, tense with awe, and glistening pools of her eyes. . . .

She had been great as the night—universe breathing to universe—

As they walked, he fancied he heard a sob in her throat, low, persistent. At the door of her house, she turned simply and walked in. Her manner, with its simple unconsciousness of his presence, was final. He would never know. The idiocies of the evening—her final simplicity—? Her expression, "like a prop in this night," came to him.

"Bosh, she heard someone pull that—sometime. Just a phrase—"

But he was unconvinced.

As he walked on, the night was filled with little whistling sounds, like a low whimper, or breath caught sharply between the teeth. . . .

COLOUR AND CALORIES

By J. C. Drake

LOIS is a brunette and cold. She chills any ardour with steely glances and discourages all pleas for a kiss. I shall part with her. There are other girls. There is Hilda. Hilda is not a brunette and cold. She is fair and warmer.

A WOMAN always kisses her husband good-bye with some show of interest. There is always the chance that he may never return.

PASTEL

By Jean Allen

THE sky and sea,
An indivisible sheet of grey blue,
Shut down
On the distant line of saffron beach.
The tide creeps slowly over the inlet,
Widening the curving stream
That intersects the inland meadow.
Nearby,
The foghorn warns unceasingly.

Here am I still,
Where you left me in the misty lilac dawn.
The locust leaves flutter above me
In the tremulous wind
And drift listlessly down
About my hammock.
I close my eyes
And see your eyes,
Wistful, searching,
Looking long into my own,
As your hands
Draw my face towards your lips
With never a spoken word.
I remember the look
Of the marsh at flood tide,
An opaque silver lake
At the foot of the hill;
And the far faint lights
Of a steamer passing, ghostlike,
In the early morning stillness.

Now,
In this pallid sunlight,
I remember the tenderness of your eyes:
Yet,
Do I question the translation
Of your eloquent silence.

MELODRAMA

A ONE-ACT SKETCH

By J. R. Milne

PARTICIPANTS:

HERO
HEROINE
VILLAIN
MAID

TIME AND PLACE BOTH UNKNOWN

STRANGE as it may seem, there are no beds in the room; there are no French windows; and there are no curtains behind which a stealthy visitor might hide. It is not a bedroom. There is a table near the centre littered with books and magazines. It also supports a box of cigarettes. About the room, promiscuously, are a number of comfortable-looking chairs. There are a few that do not seem inviting. A bit to the left of the table is a lazy divan. On the divan, reclining with her knee jutting upwards, is the Heroine. I must call her the Heroine because I don't know her name. She is smoking a Murad and is contemplating the ceiling, perhaps thoughtfully, perhaps vacantly. It is very hard to tell. There is an ash-tray beside her, but she ignores it when she flicks her cigarette.

I cannot retard the action, for there is nothing else to say. A door opens—there are two doors to the room—and she turns and rests on her elbow. It must be the Hero.

He advances to the table, takes a cigarette from the box, fingers it, and then throws it back. He appears dejected.

HEROINE

(*Yawning listlessly.*) Hello . . .

(*He seats himself with a grunt in an armchair by her side.*)

HERO

It's a devil of a life, isn't it?

(*Her views seem to coincide with his. She nods, and looks at him quizzically.*)

HEROINE

It sure is; but what are you going to do about it?

HERO

Do you know . . . I'm getting sick and tired of the whole business. (*He shakes his head gloomily; and at a word from the Heroine, reaches over and rings for the maid. The Heroine once more nods sympathetically. It eggs him on.*) A year ago I had figured that I had draped myself over the back of a gilt chair three thousand times. Now I've lost track of the count, but I know it's humiliating. And there are other things.

HEROINE

(*She is getting interested. She leans toward him mournfully.*) And think of me. I've left enough meringues and ices untasted to start a new Sherry's. They never let me eat them. And I like them.

(*The Hero's determined manner shows that he is not to be outdone. He started the complaint and has a right to talk.*)

HERO

They never let me shoot my cuffs. (*He shoots them defiantly.*) And I'm always fastidious in dress. Lord, how I hate a fastidious man!

HEROINE

I don't mind being considered beautiful. (*She admits it quite casually, and contemplates the débris on the floor. Then she makes use of the ash-tray. It is not wise to bait the maid too severely.*) But when they speak of my complexion as one that scorns powder—it's an insult. Any woman has a perfect right to improve herself . . . a little. (*She looks as if she expected him to contradict her, which a Hero never does.*)

(*The maid wheels in with the tea wagon. And, as the Heroine grasps the teapot, he scowls.*)

HERO

There's another thing. They make me take lemon in my tea . . . and I like it with four lumps . . . no cream.

(*The Heroine obeys.*)

HEROINE

Have you any idea how many cups I have to drink in one working day? (*There is no answer forthcoming.*) I'm getting to be a tea reservoir.

HERO

And every time you drink a cup of tea I have to smoke a cigarette. I get it both ways. I'm ruining my health. (*He studies her, and then plunges.*) I read a story a short while ago about a Frenchman who had a hundred-odd children. He was a bush-leaguer!

HEROINE

(*Not comprehending.*) A bush-leaguer?

HERO

(*Smiling doubtfully.*) Have you any idea how many *we*—we have?

HEROINE

(*Blushing—being a heroine it is one of her assets.*) No-o . . . but . . .

HERO

Well, it might be worse. . . . The playwrights usually have sense enough to end at the marriage. But sometimes they go too far. At any rate, we've got far too many.

HEROINE

(*Turning so that she cannot see his face.*) You don't seem to like to have children. . . .

(*The Hero is confused. The situation is delicate.*)

HERO

Well . . . it isn't that. Of course . . . well, I don't know just what to say. But if I were a bookkeeper drawing thirty per, I'd have a devil of a time.

HEROINE

(*Mournfully.*) You don't love me any more. . . . (*He moves to her in consternation, and, bending, kisses her lips lightly.*) No . . . You don't love me any more. I think it's the Vampire. (*She doesn't notice the startled look in his eyes.*)

HERO

(*Insincerely.*) Of course I love you. But you must admit that this life would bore anyone. . . .

HEROINE

But you don't have to be mauled by the Villain. You don't have to be forced down on to a divan by brutal strength. You don't have to have your hair undone in fierce struggle. You don't have to have your clothes ripped by him. And you don't have to have

him kiss your unwilling mouth passionately . . . though he does kiss rather nicely.

HERO

(*Smiling craftily.*) Are you sure you don't like all that?

HEROINE

(*Flushing.*) I won't deny that it's almost pleasant at times . . . almost. Still, it's rather provoking to have to go through all that strong-arm stuff just for the sake of a kiss at the end.

(*The Hero, warming to the discussion, has forgotten his cigarette. Quixotically, considering his protests, he lights another.*)

HERO

Speaking of struggles, do you realize that whenever you're wrestling with the Villain I'm trying to break down the door with a chair, or to climb through the window? It's no joke, from my standpoint; and I don't have the satisfaction of getting stolen kisses. And I have to fight the Villain. Of course, I always win out in the end, but he gets in some good licks. Do you know that the cellar's almost full of my liniment bottles?

(*Her eyes radiate pity.*)

HEROINE

Poor boy; you have a hard time. But don't forget that I had an awful time with the Vampire last week. It was when I caught her making love to you in her apartment. I had to pull her hair and scratch. But she can pull harder than I can and her nails are longer. One of our recent babies saved the situation. (*This was malicious.*)

HERO

The Vampire is a splendid woman.

HEROINE

(*Thoughtfully.*) As you accused me of caring for the Villain, why shouldn't I think things about the Vampire? You never call me a splendid woman. . . . I think you're in love with her!

(*He bites his cigarette in his agitation. He splutters into his handkerchief in an effort to rid his mouth of the bitter grains. For a moment he cannot speak.*)

HERO

Don't you think such things! You're my wife . . . we've been married enough to make it a reasonably sure thing. And if ever I catch him! . . .

HEROINE

(*Forlornly and meekly.*) Yes . . . but Rudie . . .

HERO

(*Interrupting.*) . . . So you call him Rudie! (*He makes for the door.*)

HEROINE

Where are you going? . . .

HERO

(*Very explicitly.*) Out!

(*The door closes. For a moment or two the room is very quiet. The Heroine lights another Murad and burns her finger in the act. She squeals. The other door opens—we put two in the scene—and a stranger enters. He must be the Villain, for there are only two men in the cast.*)

HEROINE

(*Beaming over a stray tear.*) Oh, Rudie!

VILLAIN

(*Kissing the burnt finger, and seating himself on the divan.*) Love!

HEROINE

But you mustn't waste your kisses that way, Rudie. (*He takes the hint, and they cling together until air is absolutely necessary. She gasps. Her cheeks are rosy.*) Delicious!

VILLAIN

(*Fondling her hand.*) What about *him?* . . . (*He points to the door through which the hero has made his exit.*)

HEROINE

I think it will be all right (*She smiles reminiscently.*) I know him rather well.

VILLAIN

(*Drawing her to him.*) And he will grant a divorce? . . .

HEROINE

I am almost sure of it. Oh, Rudie! . . . (*Her voice is muffled.*) I'm not sure that I like you quite so rough.

VILLAIN

(*Severely.*) You must take me as I am. . . . (*She submits.*)

HEROINE

(*Her eyes frown. She is troubled.*) He was speaking about the children this morning. What will happen to them after the divorce? . . .

VILLAIN

(*With a confidence he does not feel.*) Why, he'll want them himself, of course.

HEROINE

N-no. (*She shakes her head despondently.*) He doesn't seem to have lost much love to them. Besides, as he said, there are too many for any one man to look after.

(*The Villain is annoyed. Here is a contingency he had not foreseen. Then he laughs.*)

VILLAIN

Why not leave things as they are . . . as far as the children are concerned, I mean. Neither of you pay much attention to them, and I'll swear you don't even remember all their names. Forget 'em!

HEROINE

Oh, cruel! . . .

VILLAIN

(*Doggedly.*) Well, what are you going to do?

HEROINE

(*Tearfully.*) I don't know. . . . (*He manages to kiss the tears away—they are not very abundant, perhaps copious is a better word.*)

VILLAIN

(*Soothingly.*) . . . Then it's all settled. (*They kiss, and neglect to unlock themselves. Time passes, not much, but some. The door opens . . . either one . . . and the Hero enters. He scowls at the amorous couple. The Villain tries to disengage himself furtively, though he knows it is useless.*)

HERO

Pretty, pretty! (*The Heroine notices him for the first time. Her lips twist. She is uncertain whether it is best to laugh or to cry. She does neither.*)

HEROINE

Rudie and I are going to be married. (*The Villain nods.*)

HERO

Yes?

HEROINE

(*Emphatically.*) Yes. Just as soon as you and I can get divorced. . . .

HERO

And when will that be? (*The Villain decides that he must assert himself.*)

VILLAIN

Why right away, of course!

HERO

(*Paying no attention to the Villain.*) You can't get married. (*The Heroine stares at him; the Villain is uncomfortable.*)

VILLAIN

But why? . . . (*He gets to his feet uneasily, and attempts an attitude of indifference while lighting a cigarette. Cigarettes are handy things.*)

HERO

(*Musingly.*) It's impossible.

HEROINE

But you haven't told us why. . . . (*The Hero smiles.*)

HERO

Because your children would be a menace to the world. . . . The offspring of a Villain and a Heroine. It's all off. There's no chance.

HEROINE

(*Suspiciously.*) How do you know? (*Then she thinks she understands.*) You've been to see the Vampire! You were going to marry her. . . . And when you found that it couldn't be done you come back and pretend innocence. You fraud! . . .

HERO

(*Losing his composure.*) Well . . . (*He tries to find an excuse, but he feels that he's caught.*) At any rate, you can't be married. It's a fact. . . .

VILLAIN

(*Once more finding his voice.*) Who told you?

HERO

The parson.

HEROINE

(*Her eyes are contracted in deep thought. She is near to her desire, and does not intend to let a mere parson interfere.*) But we don't have to have children, do we, in these enlightened times?

HERO

(*Drawing a deep breath.*) How does the parson know that you won't have children? You can't convince *him!* He wouldn't listen to the idea. Told me it was all wrong. . . .

HEROINE

Will you let me have a divorce if I find a way to get married?

HERO

Of course.

HEROINE

(*Happily.*) Come, Rudie. It's all settled. (*She turns back to the Hero.*) I know a perfectly dear old Justice of the Peace who isn't anxious for the safety of the world. And you don't care for children, anyway. (*The Hero shows no sign of elation.*)

HERO

It's no use. I tried him, too.

HEROINE

(*Dismayed.*) And he refused? Why? . . .

HERO

He's in love with the Vampire himself.

HEROINE

(*Laughing.*) Well, that lets you out, but it doesn't affect Rudie and me. (*The Hero shrugs.*)

HERO

He won't marry you, either. (*They regard him in astonishment.*)

VILLAIN

Of course he will!

HERO

(*Wearily.*) Oh, go ahead and try . . . but he won't do it. He would lose his only excuse for not helping me out. (*The Heroine casts herself upon the divan in tears. The Hero moves to the door.*) I'm going back to the Vampire. She's used to free love, and won't miss a little thing like marriage. (*The door closes behind him.*)

HEROINE

(*Sitting up.*) Let's elope, Rudie. . . .

VILLAIN

(*Taking out his watch.*) Can't be done. . . . We go back to work for Klaw and Erlanger in less than an hour. Besides, there's no sense to it. You heard what he said. Let's forget the marriage hokum and try out this Palais Royal free love stuff. It sounds pretty good.

(*Her voice muffled.*) Yes . . .

CURTAIN

FEAR

By Helen Drake

SHE aged through fear.

* * * * *

When a burglar flashed his light in her face she said: "All of my jewels are in a vault. You had better depart before the servants hear you."

When they warned her that the canoe was unsafe in the gale, she told them that she could swim a mile without tiring.

When a poisonous snake coiled at her feet she said: "How beautiful. It is the colour of my emerald necklace."

When a mad dog pursued her, she climbed up a tree like a small boy, laughing.

* * * * *

She aged through fear of old age.

LIFE IS A CHAMELEON

By John McClure

TELL me not how loveliness
Brightens and flies:
Life is a chameleon
Of all changing dyes.

Beauty, beauty perishes.
Loveliness must pass.
Even so: yet life is still
Lovely as it was.

Beauty begets beauty
Though all beauty fades:
Life is a chameleon
Of all changing shades.

HOME

By Joseph Upper

I

IT was evening when he made up his mind.

The resolution came to him with the calm certainty of the evening breeze. He would go back. Six hours short of the next twenty-four would find him there.

He had only to take a train, then another train, and watch the pictures along the way change with the leaping miles until they fitted once more into the old, familiar frames. The low, rolling land with blotches of small timber and occasional ribbons of peaceful water would gradually give place to the rugged hills and fruitful valleys which he knew so well, to the mysteriously towering woods and the roar of narrow, tumultuous rivers.

A string of familiar villages came last, and then—home.

That was it. His sisters were right about it after all. It was home. Even though they hadn't got on with him any too well, it didn't matter now. He could afford to forget all that. He had been too impatient anyway.

It was a mistake to expect them to understand. He hadn't clearly understood, himself. No wonder they were sceptical and unsympathetic. What did they know about art? They knew nothing save their sewing tables and their book-keeping, and it was foolish of him to expect that they would see why he wanted to come to the city and write when he might have stayed at home and perhaps have come to be floorwalker in Stanley's Department Store.

Now he could afford to forget it all, and he *would* forget it all and would go home. Everything would be different now. They would be so glad to see him that they would forget their earlier disappointment, and he would forget all their old cruelty and persecution. It was home that he wanted. He wanted to be with his own people, and these sisters were all the people he had. Yes, it was all settled. He would go home to-morrow.

II

THE sunlit fields and sparkling rivers became indistinct as the day drifted into evening. Now and then the smoking chimneys of busy manufacturing towns loomed up out of the vanishing stretches of farmland, and the train stopped to let more people get on. Soon it would be time to change stations. Then the other train, and a long ride through the night. He hoped he could get a sleeper. Maybe not. It didn't matter anyway. He could sit up. He could sleep when he got there.

There was no room in the sleeper. He had feared as much. Ought to have made reservations. But it didn't matter. He was going home.

Darkness settled over the countryside. The train raced on through oblivious villages. Now and again, shading his eyes with his hands, he could see enough from the window to make out where they were. They had passed the mountains that skirted the farther side of the wide river. A long valley of fertile wheat fields came next, then the capital of the State. There was where the hills began. Then a chain of manufacturing centres. He would have to change cars again. It was a tiresome trip. But after all it

was worth while. He would be at home in the morning.

Light came creeping over the hills like a wildcat. It must be morning, then. He guessed he had been asleep. Anyway he had changed cars all right. This was the last lap of the journey. The woods were a melancholy grey in in the first shafts of dawn.

Soon he would see the old, familiar country. The sun would come out and strike the scattered rocks on the hillsides. The train raced on through the strangely coloured haze that belonged neither to night nor to morning.

An hour now, an hour at the most, and he would be at home once more.

III

"WHEN you have to work—"

His oldest sister was speaking.

He knew what she was going to say. She had already said it more than fifty times, and he had not yet been home two days.

"When you have to work—"

Good Lord! Didn't *he* have to work? Did she think he was going to turn the next corner, pick a fortune off a drug store window, and return with the means of pensioning her for life?

"When you have to work," she whined, "you simply can't do—"

He didn't know what it was she said you couldn't do, and he didn't care. He reached for a book and opened it. He recognized it as one he had sent her.

"Have you read any of this?" he asked.

"Yes. Quite a good deal of it. It's good."

Inane commentary. He turned the pages. Practically all of them were uncut. "Liar!" he ejaculated under his breath.

Elaborate plans were being made for his entertainment.

"Now if we go for an auto ride in the morning, we'll have to 'phone Mr. West about his car. The State roads are the only ones that are good to ride on. Where shall we go? Is there anything you'd like especially to see? The Government has been building some new houses over the river for the munitions workers. Would you like to see those? Of course, we'll go to the cemetery. I don't think you've been there since—"

"Ye Gods! Can these women think of nothing except workmen's cottages and the cemetery!"

Finally they went to bed. He was alone in his old room. How little it was. He wondered vaguely how he had ever endured it here two whole years. In the hall the two women were still discussing the proposed auto ride.

"If only Mr. West wouldn't talk so much while he is driving. Of course, there's that other man, but we don't know his name. I don't see why you didn't remember it. You might have thought that we would want to hire him sometime."

Why, if it caused all this discussion, couldn't they abandon the scheme? What was the use of taking all the joy out of it this way?

"The other man was a more careful driver. Of course, it may be too cold. We can't tell until morning. How much did Mr. West charge last time? I think it is outrageous. Just to the cemetery and around by the Turnpike? Yes, and over the river. But *that* isn't far."

Their doors closed, and he went to bed wondering if they had as much trouble as this over the details of every excursion they took. He had heard so much about this prospective auto ride that he was dreading it already.

Somehow or other there was nothing in all this that suggested home. It was more as though his sisters were trying to entertain a rich relative. But he wasn't rich. Did they think he ever would be? Was it possible that they had more faith in his work, now that it had brought him some success, than they professed? Were they building on the future? . . .

He fell asleep wondering why he wasn't enjoying his vacation.

IV

THE days dragged on. The auto ride flitted before his vision like the memory of some dull nightmare. It had been

cold and windy and damp. The woman's conversation had been cold and windy and damp. It had been cold and windy and damp in the cemetery, where they had gone last as though they were saving it, like a sort of Puritan penance, to take away the little pleasure they had got out of the forepart of the trip.

He had walked about the town. There was almost no one there whom he knew, and no one whom he knew that he really cared to see. His sisters were constantly suggesting the names of people he ought to call on—failing old women, long-forgotten acquaintances of his boyhood, distant relatives whose small talk he despised and whose inquisitive questions irritated him past endurance.

His sisters were little better. They talked shop and office, or read the daily paper aloud, or commented on the movements of their neighbours. Sometimes they regaled him with accounts of the refreshments they served when the minister came to see them, or when some of their half dozen friends dropped in for the evening.

He had walked in the park. He had followed the bend of the river beyond the limits of the town and filled his lungs with the damp smell of water-soaked reeds. It was as though the whole place were a cemetery. A thick fog of melancholy recollections hung about his walks and no ray of present interest could penetrate it. The streets of the town were like those he had read about somewhere, in some quaint volume, and the people who passed back and forth to and from work seemed to be actors in a motion picture. It was all so remote that it seemed foreign. He was a stranger in a strange land where memories were the only friendly things in evidence; and *they* were sad.

Yet this was the place from which he had gone forth, from which he had been almost driven forth, to shift for himself and make a living if he could. This was the place to which he had hurried with the eagerness of the racing trains, through all the intervening valleys and past the darkly wooded hills. This was the place his sisters were for ever writing to him about, the place they called home. He had left his work to come back here.

Suddenly his mind travelled back again across the swiftly traversed landscapes to the city he had left, to the place where his work lay neglected. The walls of his room stared at him from across that distance, and the papers on his writing table beckoned to him. A strange wave of longing swept over him. And he knew that he was homesick.

V

THE sun was setting behind the vanishing hills, and the evening wind stirred the tops of the wheat into ripples like those that trouble a golden sea. The train raced on through the country quiet. He lay down the book he had been reading and looked out of the window. The last chain of hills. Soon the first of the manufacturing towns would loom up across the valley. An hour or two and he would turn in. This time he had a sleeper.

Two hours later he stood on the car steps and watched the pavements of a sleeping city where the moon made irregular puddles of light in a dark side street. The train had stopped at the largest of the manufacturing towns. In the stillness he turned back and went down the aisle of the sleeper towards his berth. Nearby the porter was regretfully informing a fellow passenger that the train would be late. He went to sleep with the thought that it didn't make any difference how late the train was so long as it finally got there.

For he was going home.

THE MYSTERY OF MAN

By Robert Merkle

THROUGH a peep-hole in time and space I look at the singular creature. I am a disembodied spirit. I look at him as he sits there, but I cannot understand him.

He sits in his chamber of horrors. He has finished his dinner; it is a dinner of the flesh of animals and of herbs. At this moment he is quiet. But in the corners of the room I see his playthings. It is a chamber of horrors. There I see the rack, the pincers, the wheel, the stake, the thumbkins, the boot, the spit, the knout, vials of poison gas—his playthings of a thousand years.

At this moment he is quiet. But I know his history. He it was who roasted Bocchoris, King of Egypt, on the spit. He it was who burned his fellows at the stake by thousands for the pleasure of the multitude not so long ago; who tore the flesh of helpless women with white-hot pincers for the glory of his God; who wrenched apart the limbs of petty thieves upon the rack, broke the bodies of vagabonds upon the wheel, drew and quartered his traitors in the market-place. He it was who drowned women and children in the river Loire a boat-load at a time; who guillotined for pleasure. He it was who threw his fellows to the lions in the Coliseum; who on the great plains ate the heart of his defeated enemy, steaming and quivering yet; who freezes his fellows slowly to death with douches of water in merry Russia.

He is a beast—cunning, intelligent, but a beast. At this moment he is quiet. His animal face is wreathed in dreams. He has eaten his dinner. What deviltry he will hatch to-morrow no god knows. But now he is quiet. He looks at the crescent moon in the silver mists of heaven. His face is rapt, exalted. He is mumbling to himself over and over again, caressingly, mystically: "The rose has enchanted the nightingale. . . . The rose has enchanted the nightingale. . . ."

THREE VOICES

By George Sterling

WHITE dove, the morning light
Is on the grasses,
And in each wind that passes
A coolness of the night.
"Love! Young love!" you call.

Grey dove, the moon is blue,
No winds remaining.
Low, low is your complaining,
In woodlands dim for you.
"Love! Soft love!" you cry.

Dark dove, where shadows are
None hears you calling.
Night and the dews are falling,
Below the evening star.
"Love! Lost love!" you mourn.

MUSIC IN THE DESERT

By Milnes Levick

I

THE girl stood at the end of the shack's narrow porch. Her slim figure was limned with peculiar charm against the softening hues of the earth, the mountains, the sky. She gazed over the scant brush sloping down to the valley, over the desert below and the hills massed distantly, seeking upon the other side of the sink for a little patch of dark green—junipers, stunted junipers of the parsimonious hills: she had been told of them by a prospector who had seen them near at hand. Often she pictured them, held by a strange appeal, as she looked across the low lands forming a great draw through which the winds of the desert swept mightily.

There was an enticement in the opalescent hills that carried her gaze far away: ranges rising, ever rising, one behind another, carrying the eye on and on. The Slate range, the Coso, the Argus; beyond, the Panamints: lower bastions of the Sierras, far flung upon the wastes, indifferent, ever changing, yet with that power which draws men to them beyond recall. The desert had already touched her for its own.

Her upraised hand, resting against the wall of the little restaurant, touched a card announcing the coming of an itinerant dentist. With the arm still poised high, she turned her head—a movement which suggested rather than showed the grace of a body between childhood and girlhood. From the other end of the town, a quarter of a mile away, there came music of brass. It rose, clear but modulated by the distance, above the deep hum of the great mine's hundred-stamp mill beyond.

It was the first time a brass band had come to Santa Juana. The girl was delighted. Though she had heard her mother's boarders speak of the band, now she had almost consciously tried to nurse her interest into surprise, for events were few.

A German band, the men had said, of four pieces: a band of the type once common in even the great American cities, but now driven to such resources as this mining camp. The musicians, fat and yellow moustached, had come down over the Tehachapi from the oil fields of the San Joaquin, the farming towns above, the little cities still strung meagrely through California's immense central valley.

They were playing "The Beautiful Blue Danube." The girl recognized it: it was one of the few tunes of the phonograph in the union hall, where, infrequently, she had gone to dances. Her mother would not often let her go: the town's grand balls, advertised through the country in grandiloquent placards, drew from Mojave, sometimes even from Bakersfield, women of whom her mother disapproved.

Save for those dances, music had been for the girl only an occasional Sunday reverberation from the square little church at the end of the street.

The thought of restrictions on such amusements recurred now in the form of an impression of the total result of many instances: they gave an incongruous effect of narrowness to the material vastness before her.

This desert set between the ranges was immensity to which she had come to respond, adjusting herself to its caprices, finding in it fellowship, intimacy,

even a material spirit almost greater than the warmly physical solicitude of her mother in flesh.

For five years now they had lived here, the woman busied with her little restaurant, the girl free with much leisure without companionship. There were few of her age in the camp and between them there acted and reacted with strange force barriers of caste, above and below, and the economic pressure of the camp's division, union faction against non-union, each with its stores, its clubs and halls, its trend toward hostile entity.

So it was when they first came in and so it was now. Yet she had come a child of the cities and in those five years the hills, the skies of marvellous stars, the waste, its creatures and its almost pathetic striving for a luxuriance like that of the favoured places—all this had become a part of the girl's life and emotions, giving surcease and response.

She had been frightened in the beginning: not overwhelmed, for her child's soul had been too immature to grasp to the full the solitudes, but with all the city child's diffidence in the face of an unaccustomed nature. Then as the desert life unfolded itself bit by bit she had become fearful of the silence of each isolated aspect in turn. Her salvation had been a dim comprehension, more certitude than guess of the fellowship of all nature, a feeling of a scheme of things that could evolve and embrace the centipede no less than man.

Man and the beings of the baking earth, they followed their existence side by side, and the girl, seeing, had pondered on the common need and impulse back of it all, ever since that early day when she had first wondered which of the mutually inimical was the more dangerous to its foe. Then she had come to learn that even here was found a compromise, a sort of tacit truce, whereby the orders continued on their ways without the utmost of inevitable conflict.

A passing philosopher's chance words in the restaurant, the old wonder of a biblical sage, curiosity with but a modicum of childish cruelty, the mysticism innate within herself—these had helped her gradually to view the sidewinders and scorpions, the things of shell and scale, as of a fraternity in which, somehow, she herself had a humble Franciscan part. And there were even birds . . .

In this, it is true, the negative was ascendant; but in the love she had for the flowers of the desert there was a passion, an esthetic development, which in other setting would have found an expression more exquisite perhaps, but no more poignant.

To the casual eye, the desert is a plain of eternal worn sage and darker greasewood. To the seeing eye, it may be a garden, especially as here, rising above the lower levels. After winter snows and rainfall, inadequate as they are, old earth strives in gratitude and the soil with mighty efforts puts forth tenderness.

For this girl of the desert there were the blossoms of the myriad cacti; there were bluebells and asters. May, now come, had brought her the red mountain tulip, cousin of the tardier white tulip. There were strange greeneries greyed with the tint of the wastes; squaw cabbage, a reputed delicacy; Indian paint brushes, other plants whose names showed that even here the children had created a nomenclature of their own. Sometimes, on the heights, she found a single thistle of the uplands, a red jewel of a flower, clear and deep, poised on a slender, chased stalk of dull silver.

These were recurrent delights, however: there was with her always a rare joy in the magnificence of the setting itself. At hand, the hills gripped the desert with spurs sublime in their barrenness. Mile on mile the floor of the valley stretched out, its details deceivingly clear: the little railroad under the hills opposite Santa Juana, the red station from which the stage brought the passengers; the great sink below, a saucer twenty miles from tip to tip, where they stacked salt on the bed of a deep lake; and above, the deceptive rise of

the plain, up which a mixed train smoked furiously under each afternoon's sun and from whose distance there came at times the glint of rails at a curve. Those trains: climbing, always climbing, past the glaring flanks of the Sierras, up through the Indian Wells country, of which she had heard vaguely, past lakes and forests, puffing on slowly for hundreds of miles: it was of these that she thought, the trains leading to the wonderland beyond the horizon, rather than of the cars that came down, going toward Mojave, whence she herself had come years before, and on to the world which had been hers in the beginning.

A creation apart: and into this had come the little German band whose crude blare was harmonized for her by the desert itself.

A deep inhalation brought to her the flavour of the wilderness in which she had come to see riches: the keen air of the wind-swept trough which, three thousand feet or more above the sea, somehow seemed to lie at the bottom of the world, with all the sky pressing upon it.

The sun now edged against a ridge, and a swift dusk was tinting the hills and levels with colours richer than any gayness. Within the shack, her mother had switched on the lights.

The girl turned. As her hand dropped from the wall she looked at the dentist's sign with blank lines filled in with pen, and for the first time the wording suggested to her not a condition or a half casual, half routine event, but a person, a man.

"*Dr. George T. James, D.D.S., begs to announce that he will conduct his office in Santa Juana from May* 18 *to May* 20 . . ."

This was the day he would come.

II

"HELEN."

Her mother called.

The girl moved slowly into the dining-room. Beyond was the kitchen; beyond that, overhanging the valley, a midden of cans in the foreground, was the single room, crowded with a strange medley of the ornate and the utilitarian, which mother and daughter called home.

At once she set about arranging the tables—two rows of them, three deep, with red-checked cloths. In the centre of each was a glass filled with butterfly tulips: the girl's own touch.

"Better hurry up," cautioned Mrs. Brady from the kitchen, and the cutlery jingled.

But Helen was not thinking of the task in hand: she wondered idly if the dentist would dine here on this visit. Yet she had no doubt.

On the false front of the shack there appeared, in black and white, the name of the proprietress and the nature of the establishment. An ice-cream announcement below was flanked by this inheritance from the previous owner, indifferently done in yellow and green: "Español cousine aquí."

Mrs. Brady, taking it with the rest of the house, had added a sufficient knowledge of Spanish dishes to vindicate it. In time had come a passing proficiency: it was this that had first attracted the dentist, as others before him.

Helen remembered now how, after his first meal, he had bantered her mother: "Brady—a fine name for a Spanish cook: but they never made better frijoles."

Helen smiled at the recollection. He seemed to her, in retrospect, an entertaining fellow, and a gentleman.

She wondered what a gentleman was, after all. Had she ever seen a real gentleman? So few men at all approaching the province of gentility had come to her notice, here, in the mining camp.

As she tried to recall them according to her understanding, unwittingly she contrasted each with the travelling dentist. When she realized this she did not smile but justified herself with the defence that he alone of them all did she really know. . . . She had met him five times.

There was the company doctor. He passed every day, on horseback, in puttees and carrying a crop. His figure was the most familiar, yet he had never spoken to her.

Had she been a reader of romances, she might have dreamed upon this man, retaining something of the fop, perhaps defensively, amid the rawness of the camp. But she had never had a book, seldom a magazine.

Then the mine owner himself. A grand person, he came not infrequently and the camp watched him with a multiplicity of emotion, from deepest loyalty to deepest hate.

Once or twice a traveller, detained, had strolled into the restaurant. But for the most part the men with whom Helen had come in contact were those who boarded at the restaurant: a clerk or two, teamsters, some of the miners. They were men of varying ages, from lads to greybeards, and they followed in common a manner of life in which the taking of food is, however essential or even grateful, a cursory business.

To each of them the young girl, safeguarded by her mother, represented in this out of the way corner of the earth a desirable quality, an appeasement. To them, indeed, she was a note from the eternal song. And yet, though she went among them day by day, her service touching their lives at an elemental point, never once had they awakened in her the stirrings of womanhood.

They began to enter now, as she finished setting the tables. Some greeted her with a nod or a word, a few by name.

At each opening of the door there came clearer a lilting bit of music. The men talked about the band: it was a tremendous joke. Pleased as children, they hid their excitement under laughter at sallies which crudely hit upon the appearance, the comportment, or the mannerisms of the players. The girl laughed, too: still, she felt regret that fun should be poked so at the bandsmen, for after all to her they seemed benefactors. She strained to hear them, and once half opened the door, leaning against it till her mother recalled her to duty.

The tune was something lively now, one that she did not know, but it thrilled her, setting her aloof to the dining-room, bringing a new pleasure that made her pulses jump. Music: she had never considered it before, had accepted it indefinitely as a part of man's world remote, like all the other achievements through which the race had become articulate. And now was music: a new factor, to make her heart busy with amorphous but poignant emotions and desires.

With more annoyance than she had ever felt toward them before, she turned from the chaffing men.

And then the door opened, under the hand of Dr. James.

As he stood for a moment full under the light, before choosing his seat, she watched him, and the comparisons that had beguiled her a few minutes before resurged swiftly.

"Good-evening, Miss Brady."

He alone had ever used the title to her. Before, it had pleased her vanity; now it was inevitably the act of a man apart, one on whom conditions seemed somehow to shape an emphasis.

"It's a wonderful band, eh?"

The remark was for all. From the men it brought acquiescent laughter, but Helen Brady, to whom the band was wonderful indeed, averted her head shyly, almost abashed as she puzzled over the slight.

"You like it?" He asked her directly, faintly divining her thought.

"I think it's lovely," she admitted.

"They're doing pretty well, the boys say."

Again he addressed the company. Talk was a part of his day's work. His manner and dress were those of the professional man of the small town; he was, perhaps, a bit more spruce than most. Yet he had the disadvantage of itineracy, which, if more lucrative as a beginning, forced him to promiscuous affability along his route: at times it made him envy almost with bitterness the dentist whose practice is drawn

from a single community. He bestowed a revengeful and compensatory care upon his tyro's Van Dyke beard.

Helen, having set the dishes before him, frankly regarded his table manners. She wondered if the company doctor used his silverware as did this man; she contrasted him in turn with the boarders, realizing at last how grotesque was their employment of knife and fork. He chatted with her as he ate, of where he had been, where he would go; of Spanish cookery and the weather; he described crop and financial conditions as if she were a man.

"It must be wonderful to go around the country like that," she commented.

"Oh, it gets tiresome, after the first." He was at once blasé.

"Do you stay in all of the towns as long as you do here?"

"In some, a week." His tone was superior. "But then, in others I stay only a few hours. Some day I'll pick out a live town, maybe Bakersfield, and settle down. But I'm doing pretty good now."

Bakersfield—she had heard that it was a great place, an immense.

"Have they many German bands in Bakersfield?" she asked.

He laughed and she felt he was very experienced.

The men were going out now, one by one. At each opening of the door she again heard the band.

As they were left more and more to themselves, his manner became confidential. Of his plans and hopes he spoke more intimately; of his practice, his schooling and his prowess and pranks at college.

She listened intently, striving to see through him to the big world beyond, glad that one such as this had come to her.

"If that goes through," he declared, with a trace of swagger at his own perspicacity, "I won't have to bother with any practice, anywhere."

He was speaking of a trivial gamble in oil lands in the San Joaquin. "Why, it'll be bigger than this."

He pointed a thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the mine dominating the town, the fabulous strike that mining men still talked about from Mexico to Alaska.

The boast called up new visions to Helen Brady: she saw Dr. James in puttees and carrying a crop; she saw him in an automobile, as she remembered the owner of the mine. She pictured him amid such splendours as she knew of.

Remote, visionary, the prospect yet gave her an impression of riches real and vivid. For years she had been close to the source of wealth, but here was the picture visualized for the first time. In sober sympathy, it seemed to her a fine thing that this future might be that of this man, who had called her Miss Brady.

They were alone now: the last of the diners had left, and he talked to her about them, trying to draw her to fuller speech. Shyly she told him her trifling observations and records of events: that there were few boarders because most of the miners, foreigners, "bached" it in shacks, eight and ten together; that the week before someone had given the fire alarm—three shots from a pistol—in the main street, but it had not amounted to much; of how she had found strange bedfellows, a gopher and a snake, in the same burrow.

He interrupted by leaning forward, and his hand touched hers across the red-checked cloth.

"Won't you come up town with me?—there's not always a band," he said.

"I couldn't."

Her answer came automatically. But her mother had nearly always said no before, on the few occasions—she could count them—which had arisen.

"But you must." The dentist was insistent. "Ask your mother."

The girl listened; there was still audible the music, exhilarating, stirring hidden emotions esthetic and still deeper. Then she rose.

Mrs. Brady, red with dishwashing, but benign, guessed it would be all right for a few minutes; yes.

Helen crossed the room briskly, but

the dentist was before her, holding the door open. A door held open for her! She had passed in through it a young girl, sisterly waitress of miners and teamsters.

Now, for the first time, she passed out with a young man holding it open, a professional man, a gentleman, one to whose attentions she had never consciously looked forward. . . . In truth, she had never thought of any at all like this.

III

It was dusk, and the vague tones of a great peace were settling over the desert and its hills, beyond the little cluster of the town's lamps. On the slope beside them, high above, clearly isolated lights of mine and cabin hung like stars.

They advanced in the half light down the rutty street—the one street, no more than a road, with its houses askew or clustering about a whorl where a gully cleft the heart of the town.

It was here that they found the band, standing before the hotel. Miners were lounging about, clerks, storekeepers, those few of the town not directly connected with the digging of gold from under the hills. Here and there was a woman.

The crowd listened indolently to the end of the piece; then, from a murmur and laughter came the shout of a miner, a cry of pleasure with a pretence of mockery to hide the embarrassed ingenuousness. The cry found echo in the heart of Helen Brady, a heart expansive, searching for that which would accord with its intense delight. She looked on bright-eyed in childlike silence while the dentist, his arm through hers, drew her closer.

"You like it?" he asked, amused, and she scarcely heard to nod.

"Then it's worth the two bits," he said as he tossed a quarter into the passing cap of the leader.

A tremor of shyness dispelled the last of her passivity.

They played again and yet again, and through it all the girl stood wordless, moved by the music, by the dentist's care, by his proximity. Her senses attained an odd swiftness for recording these new emotions, which merged to thrill in mind and body and soul. Here was an opening vista from which the life of the past took on an aspect not devoid of dreariness in contrast with the pleasure of the moment; but the future was all golden haze, with her mountains great glowing gems thick with flowers, and among them a presence walked.

By and by she drew back, tugging at the arm of her escort.

"We must go," she murmured.

He expostulated.

"I promised mama," she answered with simple reluctance, and they started.

For a time he was silent, and the girl was thankful.

Then:

"They're to be here to-morrow."

She did not reply.

"They're going to give a dance to-morrow night. . . . A big dance."

A sudden desire came to her, a longing to dance away all the electric urge that had been created for her by the music, the dusk and the man.

"Will you come?" he asked. "Will you let me take you?"

The restaurant, its pale light upon the road, was near them now.

"Oh, if I can!" she cried, strange hopes trembling in her voice.

She turned her head towards him.

In the darkness he dropped her arm, that he might encircle her waist. He drew her to him and kissed her on the lips. Undirected, her hands reached out; the pressure of her arms responded to his, her mouth to his mouth. Then came thought, and she pulled back, frightened at herself yet joyous. She gazed at him an instant, still silent, with the wide eyes that look upon an unsanctioned and ineffable mystery. Abruptly she darted on alone, and her form was lost amid the shadows of her home.

She did not enter at once. Surprise, alarm at her impulse, overwhelmed her.

She hid in a familiar hollow in the hillside. She was alone with her shyness, amazed at the suddenness and the unexpectedness of this spiritual experience. Her mind was fearful of its meaning, but something deeper within her smiled at her quandary.

A man had come near her, and to her in a flash he had been revealed as more than acquaintance, more than friend. She cherished the thought tenderly, pondering, certain only that it was sweet. Portent and revelation, it was beyond her conscious grasp, yet she knew without avowal that she had touched life and elicited a spark of the current.

The pervading quiet of the desert reached to her, enveloped and soothed, and a wind at play brought the far-away music to merge with the singing of her heart. . . . Gradually the flurry of her pulses stilled.

The desert, menacing the interloper with its heat and its cold, its parching and its cloudbursts and the creatures it nourished. Yet it had warmed her genially; its winds kissed her now and its splendid stars burned as to light her path. It gave forth flowers for her, and strange beauties, and it showed to her the matings and the life of little beings no less a part of the great sphere than the birds and the field dwellers of the gentler lands.

In the starlight, breathing deep of the wind, she cherished it all, this handiwork of nature of which every detail had come to be a part of her own life. Now more than ever was she drawn to it, now did she possess a great peace, feeling herself one with the mysteries at hand.

Man, the intruder; music, carried far on straying wings into the immensity; love, the interpreter—love, even here, in the solitudes. . . .

And to-morrow the ball: he was to take her. It seemed so wonderful. To-morrow. . . .

LOVE IN THE WIND

By Odell Shepard

BLOWING as the wind blows
Through the poplar tree—
That's the way that love goes
Trampling you and me.

Tendril, vein, and filament
In the wind awaken,
Trunk and bough and twig bent,
Buffeted and shaken.

All the blue sky over us
All the grasses under,
Blowing up to cover us
With a wave of wonder.

Flowing as the wind flows
O'er the poplar tree—
That's the way that love goes
Over you and me.

DEVELOPMENTS

By Thomas Effing

I AWOKE in the middle of the night, conscious that a burglar was moving around downstairs. I didn't grab a pistol. On the contrary, I felt sorry for the fellow and awaited developments. I had tried to enter in the dark myself. Presently a crash told me that he had overturned the china closet and then from a prolonged howl I knew he had stepped on the cat's tail. Then he did just what I figured. Groping for the light, he pressed the button that starts our electric piano. I went back to bed as I heard footsteps clattering down the porch steps and running hastily up the road.

IDYLL

By Winifred Welles

NOT the wise quiet pine, nor the amorous, blonde oak,
Nor the tall, pale lady elm tree,
But you, who came invisible in a magic cloak,
You, who were the wind, chose me.

I, the white little birch, who had stood alone, serene,
Content to listen and to stare,
And I never saw your hands that tore my veils of green,
Nor your lips that laughed in my hair.

You held me and kissed me, I knew your strength and grace,
And dreams rose like sap in the spring,
I trembled as with buds but I never saw your face,
I only heard your whispering.

So yawning and careless you went on to field and sea,
So here I am lonely and still—
Oh wind, wind, better to have broken me
Than leave me with roots in the hill.

THE DISADVANTAGES OF BEING A HAPPY WIFE

By Marguerite Mooers Marshall

I

THE truth may as well come out—the shameful, apologetic, undramatic truth. I am that hippogriff, that mythological monster, that unearthly curiosity—a happy wife. Not that I expect you to believe it. Your cynicism, in fact, is my one consolation. So long as it endures, some *flair* of interest may attach to my personality. I shall be delighted if sophisticated readers ascribe my candid recital of the disadvantages of my state to an academic interest in the subject. My friends, alas, will know better! . . . But has a happy wife any friends?

She has not. She has acquaintances, mistrustful and bored. She has—she acquires—a few Victorian admirers, whom she yearns to tie in front of machine-guns. She has her husband—thank the fates, even though he be responsible for the social quarantine which surrounds her. That is all.

It so happened that I was the last of my own group to marry. Several girls I knew, indeed, had been already "renovated" in the milk of jurisprudence before my first and only wedding invitations went out. Every married friend of mine was comfortably, satisfactorily unhappy. Heloise's husband didn't understand Freud and Ezra Pound. The man Dorothy married made a scene when he came home early one afternoon and found her giving tea to a Socialist with a brown flannel shirt. Virginia told all of us how her Tom raged when she decided to picket the White House—although he bailed her out promptly enough. During the war hardly a husband of my acquaintance was willing to let his wife go to France. Not that it made any difference about her going!

Naturally, with all these records of domestic infelicity before my eyes, marrying Dick seemed no rash and uncertain undertaking. After the honeymoon I expected to simmer comfortably on the broiling pan of matrimonial martyrdom. Really, I had got a bit tired of being an intelligent audience while Dorothy or Heloise or Virginia sang the saga of their woes. I yearned to unfold a woe or two of my own.

Shall I not confess it? I wanted to confess in print. The secrets of the conjugal prison-house have been pretty well turned inside out by those artists of the third degree, Marna, Helen and the rest. Still, I hoped I might discover—and disclose—a few forgotten bones, a rusty old fetter or two. Perhaps, if I were really clever, I might find in my marriage the material for a book of *vers libre*, which I could have privately printed and bound in hand-tooled leather.

For you good folk who have read all these realistic revelations, who know what marriage is, and what W. L. George says it is, there is no use in describing my honeymoon. I might sum it up by saying that as material for literature it was an abysmal failure. Neither Strindberg nor the magazine page of the New York *Evening Journal* could have done a thing with it. What Dick and I did with it was to prolong it, shamelessly, from one month to six.

We were on his yacht—not a big one, but still a yacht—and he sent an aerogram to his partners, asking them to look after things until further notice. Then he had the wireless dismantled.

When we finally returned to New York Dick had to be an extraordinary busy person. Nevertheless, it seemed so queer not to see each other from morning till night that, two or three times a week, I used to slip downtown and meet him for lunch. (I hope editorial credulity and that of the public will not crack under the strain. I am telling what happened—and happens.)

Heloise telephoned me the morning of the day I had promised to meet Dick at our favourite chop-house in John Street.

"Constance, dear," she urged, "I haven't seen you for a real talk since you came back. Do come and have lunch with me to-day."

"I'm so sorry I can't," I replied, adding with thoughtless candour, "I have an engagement with my husband."

"Oh-h-h!" From the telephone receiver was diffused an aroma of intimate understanding. "For tea, then, dear? You can? I'll expect you. Good-bye."

When I arrived at Heloise's Park Avenue apartment I was shown at once into her boudoir, where the tea-things were laid out.

"I thought we could talk better, here," my friend said softly, after putting me in a chair close to her own. It occurred to me that her expression was the glance of the cat just *before* he swallows the canary, the pre-gorge look.

"And now tell me *all* about it, poor darling!"

I shuddered. I reached wildly for a sandwich and bit it—even though I knew I was obtaining hospitality under false pretences. I understood what was expected of me. I comprehended wherein I was about to fail, to brand myself as of the prehistoric feminine.

"Wh-wh-why," I stammered humbly, "I'm very happy!"

"Oh, of course, we all say it once," she returned, with a trace of impatience. "But surely we are good friends, Constance, and you can tell me just what it feels like to be married to a caveman. We never had one in our set before. What a perfectly frightful, thrilling time you must have had on that cruise! Did he bar the door of your stateroom every night to keep you from slipping a note telling of your sufferings into the hands of the faithful sailing-master? I suppose there was a faithful sailing-master, or a mate or—somebody. Your mother said that for days you didn't touch land. I suppose that was because of his appalling jealousy. And even here in New York he makes you go to lunch with him? I never heard of anything like it. Are you followed by detectives? Does he"—her voice took on the intonation of one who tells a ghost-story—"does he—*beat* you?"

Never in my life did I make such hard work of a lie as I did of the truth I told her. I ought to have lied. Anybody ought to tell a dramatic lie when life rolls up the curtain for it.

Instead, I painfully admitted that my three months' honeymoon had been too short for me; that while Dick and I managed to get along in public without park-bench love-making we still felt we owned a private and incorporated Eden; that, in short, we amused each other more than either of us had ever succeeded in amusing or being amused by anybody else.

Heloise interrupted me at this point.

"You shall be the first to hear the truth," she declared magnificently. "Jack and I are going to separate. He doesn't understand me, and I have been psycho-analyzing my dreams for the last few weeks. My sub-conscious self has told me that I need something else in my life. I don't know who he is yet, although"—her tone grew wistful—"I have wondered if a caveman would be the next stage in my evolution. That's why I wanted to know—how yours acts. Jack doesn't want me to get my divorce until he puts through his next oil deal, so that he won't be so short of money as he is now. He would feel

ashamed to give me less alimony than Curtis Hughes gave Bess. So nothing will happen immediately, but I am not keeping anything back from you. Now don't you think you might tell me the *truth* about your married life?"

Happiness must be most uncivilizing in its effects. For a moment I reverted to cave, cat and claws.

"Maybe a caveman will be the next stage in your evolution, Heloise," I said, "but he won't be *my* caveman. Not that Dick is one; he's the kindest, cleverest, dearest person in the world. And he's *mine*. Hands off!"

There is this to be said for the primitive emotions—they get across. My flash of jealous rage—with all intellectual humility, I confess it was as old-fashioned as that—convinced Heloise, as my protestations had failed to do.

For the few minutes during which I finished my cup of tea she handled me as one handles an influenza patient—with a mask and a compassionate smile.

II

Repentantly, for our families had always been friends, I asked her to lunch that day week. She had an engagement—by the time my suggestion was finished. I may be blatantly in love with my own husband, but I still have the wit to detect the Minerva engagement, springing full-grown from the brain when an unwelcome or boresome invitation is given. My intuition was confirmed when I mentioned one or two other dates and Heloise evaded them by referring to indefinite "plans"—she thought she might go to Asheville soon.

I came away with what the novelists call "mingled emotions." I was a trifle hurt by my old friend's sudden indifference, yet a set of stubborn nerve ganglia still throbbed with resentment at the idea of Dick as Mr. Heloise No. 2.

My divagation from the trodden path of marital wretchedness was duly reported by Heloise to the other women we know. Some believed. Others scoffed. There was a tacit agreement that, fatuous pose or fatuous fact, my abnormal satisfaction with my lot must make me a social solecism, a blight on the boudoir, as it were. Therefore have my women friends become mere acquaintances.

At parties, to which both Dick and I are invited, I have to watch the silliest woman present drag Dick to the punch-bowl and then drink out of his glass. Or perhaps she rushes up and informs me, with a dagger glance of indignation, that he is sitting out a dance on the stairs with another woman. Not that Dick gives me any real cause for jealousy. Communism in husbands is simply our modern custom—and it makes a happy wife long to go back to the days when married folk went two by two, like the animals in Noah's ark.

A disadvantage of domestic felicity even worse than the predatory females is the person who admires me for the wrong reasons. When I go to lunch with my husband because he amuses me more than any other man I know, I do not like to have his sister-in-law, who never receives a divorcée, warmly commend me as the only woman of her acquaintance who has a sense of wifely duty.

When my godfather, who is a sort of elderly Dobbin, asks me if I intend to run over to Paris next spring and I answer thoughtlessly that it will all depend on whether Dick can get away, I writhe under his assurance that, by gad, I'm a wife in a thousand and know my place is by my husband's side!

I do not know it. I only know I have more fun when Dick is around—so isn't it logical to stay in the same country with him? I am willing to be called a romanticist. But to be accused of having a conscience, a sense of duty, a realization that woman's place is in the home, by Victorians on whose ideas I trample, whose conceptions of art, literature, house decoration and politics make my soul crawl—well, it is enough to drive me to get a divorce as a proof of my feminism!

Even the ever-exasperating servant

problem is intensified for me by the fact that Dick and I, between us, cannot construct a really interesting disagreement. You remember the rich drama of life the servants extracted from the complications of their betters in that realistic play of life on Long Island, "Upstairs and Down." I find the polite comedy of my own household wears terribly on the nerves of my servants.

My maid, who came to me when I was married, and who is a treasure, told me the other day that she would leave at the end of the month. She had been growing quieter and more subdued for some time, and I talked to her as kindly as I could, thinking she might be in some trouble.

It all came out. The placidity of my home was too stupefying. The husband of her last mistress used to swear till your blood run cold, and once she threw a pink marble egg at him. The penultimate master and mistress quarrelled furiously at least once a month about a young man. It was as good as a play. ("No, indeed, madam, I never listened, but you could hear all over the house. The cook says, madam, that in this house she never hears anybody holler.")

Therefore Marie goes elsewhere, to weave into her neutral, impeccable life some threads of vicarious passion and colour.

The disadvantage of not having a little problem in my marriage is emphasized whenever I see a "gripping" play or read a "darkly realistic" novel of married life. Once more my reaction is curiously compounded. I am humbly conscious that my own destiny misses much of the purgation by pity and terror for which Aristotle so highly commends tragedy. Yet in my brain a little, leaping devil of humorous tact is ever asking, "Why doesn't the injured wife of the drama and of fiction have a simple explanation with her husband in Act or Chapter I, and so prevent a temporary misunderstanding from developing into a permanent grouch—and another 'compelling human document'?"

III

No doubt you continue to disbelieve in my existence. You must perceive, however, that, granting my incarnation in human form, my disadvantages are well-nigh insuperable.

What can I do? I have made a resolve. Out of the ether, as a child draws a trinket from a Jack Horner pie, I shall pluck a *tertium quid*, a *bel ami*, a realization of the desire of my sub-conscious self. Yes, you have guessed it—his name will be Mr. Harris. With his incorporeal assistance I shall have, and give, all sorts of pleasant items for the dove functions, at which I once more shall be a welcome guest. I shall wave his name like a red flag in the faces of my godfather and my sister-in-law. I shall leave letters from him where Marie can read them. In the third act of the problem play I shall keep myself awake by thinking, "Mr. Harris would make love more effectively than that tame cat."

Happy the marriage that has neither history nor drama—but such a bore it is for the neighbours, one's friends and the servants! Behind the smoke screen of the hypothetical Mr. Harris—who will keep them all busy and happy—perhaps even that paleozoic survival, a happy wife, may yet find peace with honour.

MABEL, GLADYS AND HERBERT

By Helen Dwight Fisher

I

THE central figure of this truly shocking affair was Mabel. She was tall, with a slim, swaying figure; a great deal of dark hair, which she piled high in a barbaric, uncombed fashion; soft, heavy brown eyes; a white skin, and a wide, very red mouth.

Rather like an ultra-modern poster was Mabel, and yet with nothing hard or lined about her, and nothing consciously sophisticated. She was all curves, soft but not mushy, and above all simple, just as life had made her.

She had once been a waitress in an ice-cream parlour in a college town, but she was shy of telling you this, for later developments had taught her that all persons do not esteem waitresses.

But in her early days she had no such reticences. It never occurred to her that she was not of the best. In fact she had all the calm assurance of a personage. Perhaps she did chew gum too vociferously; perhaps she did have an ungoverned nasal voice and talk a jargon that was far from the King's English. But what were these things to the college youth, so long as she swayed to and fro among the tables, bringing them the syrupy mixtures they desired, and smiling with her wide, very red mouth? As a waitress Mabel was a distinct success, took her triumphs calmly, and was happy.

But eventually one of the youth, the son of a Southern magnate, fell so much in love with her that he wanted ardently and instantly to marry her.

Mabel was yielding—why not?—but it was the busy season and her boss objected loudly to her quitting, so that it happened that before she had irrevocably left her ice-cream parlour for matrimony, the boy's family got wind of the affair and came to look things over. And of course Mabel would not do.

It was obvious, however, that Son's ardour could not be cooled by any mere refusal to tolerate her, so his mother took a subtler course. She first removed Mabel from the congenial atmosphere of the ice-cream parlour to spend a few days in the most pretentious hotel in town.

Life for Mabel immediately became a nightmare of intricate meals, the kind of a nightmare in which you try to eat rich foods but cannot find a fork or spoon, or possibly you have too many forks and spoons and the viand before you appears impregnable. No matter what Mabel did with her forks and knives and spoons, she was sure all the waiters were laughing at her. And while she was still dazed by the atmosphere of upholstery and hushed service, the mother explained to her, not gently, perhaps, but in painstaking detail, why in her present unlearned, unpolished state she was unfit to become the wife of a Southern gentleman.

Then hastily, before Mabel had time to be either resentful or crushed, she announced that for her darling boy's sake she, the mother, would take Mabel under her protecting wing and send her for a year to a small but worthy boarding-school, where she could learn all that a rich man's wife should know and come forth polished, even as the hotel doorknobs.

Naturally Son did not take to this. What he wanted was Mabel as she was and right away—and his mother knew it. Mabel knew it, too, in her slow,

simple way, but she seemed unable to do anything about it. Had she been one of those dauntless creatures who master their own fates, she might have scorned the futility of the thing and gone coldly back to her ice-cream parlour.

But Mabel was always putty in the hands of fate—and her mother-in-law-to-be, with her diamonds, her grand, sugar-sweet manner, and her smooth brutality, completely overawed her. So she wept a little in private, remonstrated with Son that his mother knew better than they and probably it was all for the best, and then went meekly to the small but worthy school, for the first time in her life lacking in self-assurance.

And there she met the other two.

II

GLADYS was small, red-haired, and interested in temperament.

"Life," she said, while explaining the universe to Mabel, "Life is a wonderful thing!"

And then again she said life was just one damned thing after another. It all depended on the weather, the mail, and like mutable phenomena. She preferred to be called "Glad" because it seemed to her romantic, yet she did not aspire to the gladsome disposition but enjoyed fancying herself morose, loving to dwell on the tragic aspects of her childhood.

Her father, she was proud to say, was steward of a famous New York hotel. He had married her mother tempestuously after having known her just three days when she was sixteen and he thirty, and they never got on for more than three days at a time thereafter.

Glad's childhood was a series of ruptures and reconciliations, during which she was dragged from pillar to post. Finally her mother ran away with a guest in the hotel, caught cold in the haste of her flight, and died of pneumonia in a Middle-Western sanitorium just after having dictated a letter to Glad's father begging him to forgive her, assuring him that she had never truly loved another, and beseeching him, if he had ever cared for her, to cherish in her little girl's memory of her mother "all that is good and beautiful."

This event left Glad's father with an embittered though sentimental view of women, and furnished Glad herself with unlimited cause for temperament. She firmly believed that she understood life better than most people, passing for what is known in school parlance as an "intense" character. And you can imagine how she seized upon the untutored Mabel as one who must be shown the Truth.

For the most part Mabel paid her little serious attention, and yet Glad was undoubtedly her closest companion in that small but worthy school. The rest of the girls bored her; of Glad she said, "Let her rave!"

Mabel had come there dulled and chastened in spirit and was set to work on the enlivening study of spelling and English grammar. She discovered early in the game that if she opened her mouth some silly creature was sure to giggle, so she sullenly kept her mouth closed unless especially roused. She developed a haughty, defensive attitude which was usually the only expression she gave to the instinctive scorn she felt for the whole place.

To her mind it was all utterly inane. She had come there to be taught a better way of living and what had she found? A crowd of silly girls and institutionalized spinsters who lived by a series of senseless taboos and had not the slightest acquaintance with the world as she knew it. She could not even join with the girls in their chimerical love affairs, desperate flirtations with drug-clerks and passing schoolboys.

"Huh, there's nothin' in it!" she said scornfully. "You gotta show me the real thing—an' believe me, I know the real thing when I see it!"

Yet I must say for Mabel that she was clever enough to recognize that she

was in the minority, and so to learn a good deal from the majority. She became so careful of her speech that, except when unduly agitated, she used a perfectly colourless, proper but limited vocabulary and talked a fairly good imitation of Miss Gould, the English teacher. Her lack of assurance kept her voice low and gave her tones a restrained, thick quality that suggested force.

She learned also, to do her hair in a new, smooth fashion, and to chew with her mouth shut. Her long, slim body looked well in the school uniform, and, having little else to do, she took infinite pains with her nails and complexion. The result was that with her sullen aloofness she was by far the most dignified of the students and had positively an air. And if you will reflect on her physical endowments, you will realize what a striking figure she might be, lonely and quite individual in the hodge-podge of half-grown girls.

This, of course, is where Herbert comes in, although he never laid eyes on Mabel for months after she came to the school.

Herbert was, I grieve to say, the exclusive property of Gladys, or so she believed, for she was officially engaged to him. I have never known how much they were really engaged, but the story was that their fathers, being close friends, had decided that it would be well if their children married each other and so Herbert and Glad were engaged. Glad was perfectly willing, except in moments when she felt she could never trust any man and was sure marriage was "the great disillusionment." And Herbert never showed any active signs of dissent, although neither did he show vast enthusiasm.

He was an amiable youth whose motto seemed to be, "We strive to please." The teachers felt that he was "manly" and the kind one wanted around the school, for he was not only infallibly polite, but obviously well off and had the air of a man of the world. He had never done anything decisive, so far as I could discover, except to refuse to go to college because it bored him. He went docilely through a famous school for the sons of the wealthy and came forth polite, sophisticated, utterly correct on the surface, but obdurate in the matter of college.

So finally his father, who was a rich New York fur-merchant and the best friend of Glad's father, accepted the situation, giving Herbert a desk in his private office, a good-sized salary, and the freedom of New York outside the hours of nine to five, when he occupied the desk.

When I first saw Herbert he had been out of school a year and was twenty-one and still utterly correct on the surface. There seemed to be no good reason for his periodic calls on Gladys except that they were proper and expected of him. He never gave evidence of being in love with her, but you felt that he would marry her some day because it was so decreed.

There was certainly nothing revolutionary about Herbert, and yet I always suspected him in spite of that bland exterior. This may have been simply because he was too handsome, with sensuous curves about his thin politely smiling mouth, a rather scornful lift to his nostrils, and a secretive droop about his eyes—clear, Irish eyes, I must admit, that looked innocent enough.

At any rate he always appeared to me too correct and too amiable. People simply are not that way! It was as if he had a highly polished, very beautiful shell behind which there might dwell anything—but surely something. And I knew he never let Glad inside the shell.

She talked, however, not only as if she understood him to the last curve, but positively as if he were her own creation. For this reason she spent a good deal of time telling what an absurd creature he was and how little she esteemed him, although no one else, of course, might take such liberties with Herbert, and if Mabel ventured to hold opinions on him Glad quickly put her in her place.

"My dear Mabel," she said haughtily,

"how can you expect to understand a man of Herbert's type?"

But then,

"Herbert is so naïve!" she complained. "He has no interest in life, and when I try to talk with him about it, he only says, 'Why worry?'"

This she felt was characteristic of men.

"They have no idea what it is to be a woman! They don't know what a complex creature she is—and how full of moods!"

Then usually she added that she wasn't sure she could marry Herbert "in spite of his devotion."

"After all if one marries, one loses all one's illusions."

Another *bon mot* of hers was that marriage was the death-knell of development and the murder of romance. She had a great deal to say about marriage and much of it sounded well, for she was an avid reader of erotic fiction and good at picking up phrases.

Her particular followers among the girls listened in open-mouthed appreciation, but strangly enough it was on this very subject, about which she had the most to say, that she could least impress the simple Mabel. Mabel had her limits of endurance, and from the start one of these was Herbert.

"Honest, she makes me sick!" she said. "She better grab that Herbert while the grabbin's good, an' quit her jawin'. She needn't give me that line about not bein' able to bear to marry him! Gee, she makes me tired!"

And by the completeness of her relapse into her old vernacular, you could measure the depth of her irritation. But it was not because she cared what happened to Glad or Herbert, whom she had never seen except from the third-story window, that she was annoyed. It was that she was blindly, uncomprehendingly disgusted with her own predicament, and Glad's attitude seemed to typify the futility of life in general.

For Mabel was realizing more and more how useless all this school-going was so far as her own marriage was concerned—and if she was not to be married, what was she to do?

III

The girls had a way of gathering in Glad's room of a Sunday evening for uplifting conversation on love, marriage, and Herbert, and Mabel usually drifted in with them. She stood it just so long each time and then arose to say wrathfully, "My God, you little fools!" and stride out.

This gave Glad an excellent opportunity to enlarge on how little Mabel understood life and how insensible she was to its finer aspects. They must bear with Mabel, she felt, for she was here to be improved by association with them and their cultured viewpoint. And so there grew up a cult for patronizing Mabel and leading her in paths of right, which might have driven a less simple person to something more than words.

But Mabel did not care. Let them rave! She took it all as merely one more evidence of the absurdity of this place in which she had been dropped for her own good, and retired, when things became too much for her, to her own room to gaze sadly on the picture of her once-ardent fiancé.

She seldom wrote to him, partly because she realized her illiteracy and was afraid to give him too much evidence of it, and partly because she was naturally inarticulate, and he seldom wrote to her because he was too busy. So there was practically no communication between them, it being a part of the plan that he should not see her until the year was out, and it was no wonder that Mabel lapsed into apathy on the subject.

"There's nothing in it," she said dully, on one of the few occasions when she unburdened herself. "He won't marry me when I get out of here. I'll be kind of different and maybe he won't like me so well. Besides he's playing around while I'm locked up in this jail and maybe he'll find someone he likes better. There's nothing in putting these things off."

Yet it never occurred to her not to stick the year out. Putty, as usual, she had not the force to extricate herself, but said simply, "You've got to see things through," as if it were the last word.

She was unhappy, in her inarticulate way, there was no doubt of that. But it was not so much the loss of her lover (what was a lover here or there?) that troubled her, as the fact that her life had become twisted and complicated.

It was no longer the direct, simple thing of her ice-cream parlour days. She had been plucked out of the natural course and thrust into a maze of senseless activities where she was supposed to learn things she cared nothing about and to deal with persons who were absurdly lacking in common sense, according to her standards. And it was because she so resented the complication of her own life that it literally enraged her to hear Glad's attempts to complicate hers.

She became an ardent champion of Herbert, not at all because she was interested in him personally, but because she carried an eternal chip on her shoulder in regard to him in place of the one she might have carried in regard to herself. And Glad, of course, never relaxed her missionary work, so that there arose a tradition in the school that she had a "wonderful influence" on Mabel and miraculously "understood her," all of which made Mabel's subsequent conduct only the more reprehensible.

Meantime, although Mabel and Herbert never met, I am sure Glad must have told him something about her, probably just enough to bore him.

I have no first-hand information on this point because all his very proper calls were invested in inviolable privacy. If the respectable standards of the school had allowed it, Glad would have received him under dimmed lights in a far, hushed corner. As it was, on calling nights she dragged him hastily to the most remote sofa where they were supposed to partake of the soft, sweet nothings appropriate to engaged persons.

Herbert never looked in the least as if he were partaking of anything soft or sweet. Instead he frequently looked slightly bored. But Glad did most of the talking and the other conversing couples, sprinkled discreetly over the reception hall under the eyes of a flitting teacher or two, gazed on them with awe, as on two far more experienced than they.

But for all this sweet privacy, I know Mabel must have entered into their conversations, for Glad would never let escape her such a chance to show herself as the sophisticated teacher of the innocent.

I can imagine how she contrasted Mabel's crude simplicity with her own fine wisdom, and Herbert, just to change the subject, may well have inquired what Mabel looked like anyhow. To which Glad would undoubtedly reply that whereas some persons might consider her striking, she inclined to coarseness, and anyone could see that she was not a lady. And Herbert probably muttered, "I'd like to see this bird!" thinking the while what fools girls are.

He did not see the bird, not even at the third-story window where she effectively concealed herself behind other peering maidens, until the night of the memorable Senior Dance. This was Mabel's first appearance before the school public—and her last, thanks to Herbert. Heretofore it had been considered unsafe to allow her to attend functions, lest she disgrace the school, but now, as the end of the year approached and she seemed to have acquired a surprising amount of poise, it was decided to give her a trial, distributing her dances discreetly among certain carefully selected brothers and —oh, foolish virgins!—the correct Herbert.

She arrived at the dance inconspicuously enough with the rest of the girls, and yet, as might be expected, she distinctly "stood out" as something quite different from the rest, but she was not

the one who suffered by the difference.

I can imagine how Herbert felt about it if he remembered any derogatory remarks from Glad on Mabel's personal appearance. She had her hair piled high again, for some reason, and was more posteresque than ever. But there was nothing crude about her; she looked a finished product, though I grant you she was not artificial, and no one would ever have guessed that her calm dignity was entirely defensive.

I made a mental note that she was looking well that evening and no one need be ashamed of her, but thought no more of her until I happened to see her dancing with one of the most harmless brothers in the place. He was a snub-nosed, fattish, perspiring youth, who danced conscientiously, his jaw set in the painful determination to do his best, and Mabel was as bored as a queen condescending to a yokel. I could almost hear her muttering. "Ain't he the human limit?"

But how she danced in spite of him! Dancing may have been taught in the ice-cream parlour—or it may be a natural gift. At any rate, Mabel was dancing as softly and gaily as leaves in a May wind.

I regret to say that I did not notice her first dance with Herbert, but it suddenly came over me that Mabel and Herbert were dancing together most of the time. Glad, when she danced, was the jumpy kind, so that Herbert, who was long and gliding, seemed always to be holding her down. With Mabel it was different. They danced quietly, rhythmically, as if they had been made for it, and as if there were no question of effort or volition about it.

Apparently they spoke very little, but Mabel seemed to have lost some of her defensive dignity and was a much more natural creature than I had seen her in a long while, and Herbert had an air of proud proprietorship, which, had I stopped to think of it, I might have known was dangerous. Even as Glad felt that Herbert was her creation, so Herbert, discovering Mabel so unexpectedly in the arid wastes of the small but worthy boarding-school, felt as if he himself had made her and was indeed proud of his handiwork.

The thing did not become at once an open scandal because Herbert did not immediately lose his sense of the proprieties, and because no one so much as dreamed that the lowly innocent Mabel could really interest Glad's perfect Herbert.

But Herbert was clever and determined beyond anything I had ever expected of him. He danced with Glad when necessary, but cut, exchanged, and stole dances with such ingenuity that he danced with Mabel about three times as often as he had any business to.

Mabel said nothing and did nothing. She took the thing as calmly as she had her triumphs of the ice-cream parlour, expecting nothing of Herbert and yet accepting his attentions regally as her due.

And Herbert said nothing—except to Mabel. Only Glad made a point of remarking frequently how perfectly sweet it was of Herbert to be so good to Mabel. It seemed to me that anyone but Glad might have seen something besides mere kindness in the smiles Herbert bestowed on Mabel and, too, something very surprising in the fact that from the start they behaved unconsciously as if there were something between them.

A round-eyed child at my elbow discovering this, said:

"Well, really, to see Mabel, you'd think she'd known him all her life."

"Perhaps she has," I ventured.

"Oh, but she couldn't," said the child, more round-eyed than ever. "Why, she was brought up in an ice-cream parlour or something!"

After supper, which Herbert and Mabel ate pleasantly with Glad and the snub-nosed, fattish brother who was really Mabel's partner, Glad finally did decide that possibly Herbert was being too kind to Mabel.

"Really, he ought to be careful," she said. "It will be terrible for Mabel if she gets to thinking she's making a real hit—the let-down you know."

I did not tell her that I had overheard Herbert saying to Mabel a moment before, "Come on out to the porch, Mabel. I'm sick of these kids!" not at all as if he intended to let her down, and events came so thick and fast thereafter that Gladys never succeeded in warning Herbert to have a care.

IV

I REGRET, here, that I must digress slightly, leaving Mabel and Herbert comfortably outside upon the porch. Things would never have been as they were, I am sure, had not Glad just at this time allowed herself to become entangled in quite another affair.

Her room-mate, a gay maiden of many beaux, was spending a busy evening, and there was a certain tall, anæmic youth from town who was supposed to cherish a hopeless passion for her. She had been openly neglecting him in favour of a merry soul with extremely sleek hair and very pointed pumps, when suddenly the tall, anæmic lover turned ardent attentions to Glad.

Glad, need I say, was flattered. Here was something unexpected and exciting. She and her room-mate would talk into the wee sma' hours over this, so she received the anæmic one with open arms, as it were, forgetting for the moment her own private Herbert, and leaving him entirely unfettered, to sit in the shadows of the porch and make the acquaintance of Mabel.

Just at the time when certain leading spirits were eagerly begging the Head to give them one more extra and let the dance run until twelve-fifteen at least, the room-mate came to the conclusion that perhaps she did return the anæmic one's passion, and Glad was suddenly led to consider her long-forgotten dance-card and remember the defections of Herbert.

She looked about and saw that he was not in the room. The porches also she surveyed hastily, and appeared at my side exactly at the beginning of the last dance, saying breathlessly:

"I can't find them anywhere!"

The piazzas are supposed to be well policed at these school dances and it is a heinous crime to go down into the grounds, so that I thought she had simply overlooked them in her haste. But when I saw that she was right and they were not to be found it dawned upon me that this might be serious and I returned to report to the Head. She seemed to guess the truth instantly, for she rushed quickly out, ordering her minions to search the grounds and leaving the orchestra to play "Home, Sweet Home" endlessly at the behest of the delighted dancers.

It was a waiting chauffeur who finally broke the news. He said that a young gentleman had come out some time ago and driven his car around to the side door where a tall young lady stepped in.

"She wasn't a bit flustered," he said, "so I thought it was all right their going off that way."

And then being a sentimental chauffeur he added that the young gentleman kissed the young lady several times before bothering to drive away.

A glance at Mabel's room confirmed this tale, for her bureau drawers were recklessly dumped, her closet was open, showing such confusion as would have set her back at least twenty marks in neatness had she been present, but she and her hat, coat and suitcase were all too obviously absent. Fate had once more been too strong for her, and she and the utterly correct Herbert had successfully and irrevocably removed themselves from that small but worthy school.

You can imagine what an uproar this created even after we heard with some relief that they were really properly married by an obliging parson in the next town. But such a thing had never happened in the school before, and if I mistake not, it will never happen again, for the Head's first comment was, wearily, that it did not pay to take these

very mature girls, no matter who asked you to and what they paid.

Gladys of course had her innings. For a little while she was so frankly dazed that she forgot even to show her famous intensity, but the school with one accord proclaimed that in so betraying one who had been so good to her as Glad, Mabel had proved once and for all what she was, and shortly Glad was revelling in the rôle of a tragic heroine. She said she thought it lucky that she discovered Herbert's low tastes before it was too late, and added with a weary air of experience, that after all there were other things in life than marriage.

Meantime I suspect that the mother of Mabel's erstwhile fiancé must have been smiling secretly, and I presume Son himself felt that it really simplified matters a good deal.

But there was never any adequate explanation of the thing unless you call Mabel's very characteristic letter an explanation.

This came almost a week after the dance and was written on the stationery of Glad's father's famous hotel.

"*Dear Glad,*" (wrote Mabel),
"*Honest, I had to do it. He's nuts about me, and you've got to take what's coming to you.*
"*Lovingly yours,*
"*Mabel.*"

Of course, I suppose in the interests of decency I should close by telling you that Mabel and Herbert fought within a week and were in the divorce courts in less than a year. But such is not the case, though I am the last to condone their rash act.

All this, I have to confess, happened a long, long time ago, and I was only reminded of it by seeing Herbert and Mabel ride placidly by in their prosperous limousine. They have both grown very stout and look so middle-aged and settled that no one would suspect them of an impulsive youth, but she still wears effectively the diamonds and furs he showers upon her.

As for Glad, the last time I saw her she was wearing a Nile green silk smock and a fur hat that was supposed to be extremely Russian, and when I asked what she was doing she replied with thrilling emphasis, "Just living!" She has a dim, romantic studio somewhere and she told me once more with her air of experience that after all there were other things in life than marriage.

UNFORTUNATELY for most men, the women they love die the day they marry them.

THE hardest girl to teach how to swim is the one who has been taught before.

NEVER reason with a woman; it is better to make excuses.

A STORY WITHOUT A MORAL

By James Shannon

DUSSOSOIT lolled back in the deep-cushioned lounge. He blinked lazily at the purring fire, stole a glance at the rain-swept windows, and listened for a moment to the wash of the wind-haunted sea as it crashed on the beach below the bungalow. Then he ran an appreciative eye over the long shadowy room with its wealth of old editions and its rare, colourful prints.

"It is lovely," he said. "It is lovely as a woman, all shadows and mystery and subtle colour. I could marry a room like this."

"Walter Rainey did," I replied. "That is the reason I am now here. He is in Honolulu and Catherine is in the East waiting for the divorce."

Dussosoit tossed a cedar log on the fire. The flames licked up the chimney.

"Incompatibility of temperament, I suppose?" he said. "Walter was a born Bohemian in his tastes; Catharine was a Puritan. Like attracts unlike, but they don't amalgamate."

"It was the gods," I said. "Walter married for money. The gods will not stand for that. He was tired of being a promising young artist and he married Catharine because he knew she could put him where he wanted to be."

"Blame it on the gods," sneered Dussosoit; "make the facts fit your theory. Such is the legal mind."

That was like Dussosoit. He is a writer and affects to despise lawyers. I am a lawyer and consider myself as well-versed in the vagaries of human nature as any scribbler of weird, pointless stories. Dussosoit's stories are always without point. I tell him this and he replies that life is generally without point. I cannot accept this as a principle even of story telling. And human nature—life—is my business as well as his.

"It is the legal mind, as you call," I replied, "to draw a general principle from proved and ever-recurring facts. Did you ever know of a man to marry for money that retribution was not certain to follow?"

Dussosoit laughed unpleasantly.

There is something of the satyr in Dussosoit, something in his keen, Gallic eyes that grins and mocks at the dearly held conventions of society.

"He who commits matrimony must suffer the penalty," he retorted. "You cannot have your dream and eat it. But money is not an obstacle to a happy marriage. I can't accept that."

"It is Fate," I argued, not didactically, I hope. "Men who marry for monetary reasons break a natural law, the law of natural selection. And always they are punished for it; always there arises something to make that marriage unhappy."

Dussosoit lighted a cigarette, a cheap cigarette rolled in brown paper. That is another thing that irritates me to find in a person of his breeding and education.

But Dussosoit is like that—unreasonable. He enjoys cheap cigarettes rolled in brown paper, he says, and that is sufficient for him.

"And yet I came near to being mistaken once," he declared abruptly. "I will tell you, though it will do you no good. You will build another theory. And life holds no theories. There was Arthur Russel. You remember him? A dreamer and an artist, that is if a

sentimentalist can be an artist. He also held theories, only he made the mistake of putting them into practice. And there was John William Tibbets. You must remember him?"

"A born business man," I put in.

"Exactly. But they were friends, and I was their friend. A queer combination. The sentimental, impracticable, and, I imagine, somewhat lazy Russel, with his brown Van Dyke beard, weak chin, and careful, affected enunciation; John Tibbets, clean-shaven, shrewd, money-mad, and worldly-wise with the wisdom of his class; and myself, who have no viewpoint and no class wisdom. We three used to meet at the club and sometimes we would dine together. And we would talk. For, mark you, there is no talk so good as three persons attacking a point from different and conflicting angles.

"Now you may have noticed that when three men are engaged in general conversation, the discussion within an hour has narrowed to one of two subjects: women or business. We talked about women. And about marriage.

"Tibbets believed in marriage. It helped a man along, he said. But it was a business proposition. A partnership. The main thing was capital. It was foolish to marry a woman without money or the expectation of money when you could gain by marriage what it would require twenty years of shrewd bargaining to make. Romance doesn't pay six per cent.; Love seldom splits a dividend.

Russel was not of this opinion. Naturally. He was a poet. Money was infinitesimal compared to Love. It did not detract one iota from Love; it did not add one iota. Love was a divine flame, a celestial spark, that sprang up between man and woman. Money was nothing. The spark was everything.

"But marry for money? It was inconceivable. It was a sin against a God-given passion, a crime against the unalterable nature of things. Such crimes carry always their own punishment, unhappiness.

"It was the old, old argument, the eternal argument between idealism and practicality. You have heard it ad nauseam. I needn't repeat the changes those two rang in it. I cite their case now because they did more than discuss their ideas—they lived them.

"Russel was the first to marry. He married for love, which was to be expected. He was a sentimentalist. His wife was a frail, slender girl, rather pretty, with a romantic conception of love and no money. Her name was Beatrice and they were to be very happy.

"They took a small house in Bensonhurst where they could have a small garden and he could write poetry for magazines devoted to Ideals and Art.

"Luckily he possessed a few thousands left to him by a deceased aunt who had operated a small business of one sort or another. And then when one has love—!

"At any rate by scrimping and saving and sordid little economies they managed to exist; and they laughed at their discomforts and coloured their humdrum life with a delicious romance; and said they were getting the most out of life even if they didn't drive around in upholstered limousines and have a butler and footmen.

"A year later Tibbets was married. He was less precipitate than Russel as he did not believe that marriages were made in Heaven. Finally he found the girl. She had all the attributes for which he had been searching. She was rich, beautiful in a cold, statuesque way, worldly by training, and her social position was buttressed by three generations of wealth. They had a fashionable wedding and went to housekeeping in a huge apartment on the Drive. Distinctly it was a step up for Tibbets; he had garnered the fruit of twenty years of endeavour by the simple expedient of marrying it.

"But there was a string to Fate's offering. The new Mrs. Tibbets was exacting and she was shrewd. She was

chancellor of the exchequer and Tibbets was never permitted to forget it. Not that she mentioned it; she was too well-bred for that. But it was in her attitude; it was a basic fact of their relationship, so obvious and fundamental that it did not require demonstration."

"The Nemesis," I interjected. "The Certain Retribution!"

Dussosoit tossed another piece of beachwood on the fire.

"As you will," he said; "Tibbets paid the price of matrimony. His wife was a soft-pedal virago and she held the cheque-book with a firm grasp. Tibbets was reduced to the rank of camp-follower. In his own home he was about as important as a vice-president.

"The three of us still met at the club occasionally. Russel's soft collar was generally pretty well mussed and his near-tweed suit was innocent of the pressing board. But he was content. That was evident at a glance. He was crazy about his home, enthusiastic concerning the possibilities of his work, and thoroughly satisfied with his place in the cosmos. Tibbets was always immaculate; he had an air of prosperity, the sleek, well-barbared, well-fed appearance of a successful man; he patronized Russel and talked business—always business. He had his clubs, his cars, a country place, a winter home. These were the chief ingredients of life for him. But he was not happy. That I know.

"Tibbets was interested in Russel with the interest a successful man sometimes takes in a failure. He pitied him and at the same time condemned him. Russel was lazy, he would say, no initiative, no push. Look at his wife, same type, both children. You've got to be practical, self-preservation is the first law of nature. Russel should have married a woman of initiative, of energy, who would have made something out of him.

"I shall never forget his disgust at the first week-end he spent at Russel's place. Horrible, he told me, simply disgusting.

"'Would you believe,' he asked, 'that two rational beings could live like they do? Why, that kitchen was covered with dirt, pots and kettles on the floor, a week's washing hanging over the stove, scraps of old meat in the pantry, and believe it or not, a really expensive copy of a Greuze tacked on the kitchen door!'

"'They are the Last of the Romantics,' I said. 'They read Keats instead of washing the dishes and discuss vers libre when they should be cleaning the refrigerator.'

"'We dined on the porch,' continued Tibbets in a hurt voice; 'under what they called a pergola. Russel presided over a scorched roast. He wore a velvet evening-jacket, and every few minutes the dinner would be interrupted while he chased the chickens from under the table!'

"I laughed at him. People are entitled to lead their own lives. And it was only the week before that Russel had confided to me that he would rather die than be buried in a marble mausoleum like Tibbets.

"'Honestly, old man,' he had cried, 'it's no concern of mine, but Tibbets made a horrible blunder when he sold his ideals for a mess of gold—of pottage, I mean. Have you seen his place? Horrible, isn't it? Furnished like a hotel lobby. Cold, you know, and oh, unsympathetic—hard. I'd rather live in a bank. And those pictures! And those picture frames! How can people live like that?'

"And there you are. Tibbets, with a wealthy wife, several motor-cars, an established position, and the satisfaction of the successful. And unhappy. Russel, as poor as a church-mouse and as unsuccessful as a charwoman, happy."

"That is my argument," I said, a trifle complacently. "One cannot marry for money and gain any degree of happiness.'

Dussosoit rolled another cigarette.

Then, with a twinkle in his eye, he said:

"Perhaps you are right. To-day I re-

ceived a gossipy letter from the East. Mrs. Tibbets is suing for a divorce. Tibbets left her. Dropped everything. Simply disappeared."

"Nemesis," I pointed out triumphantly. "There is always Nemesis!"

"Perhaps you are right," Dussosoit repeated. "Poor old Tibbets. Life was a hell for him with that woman. I can't blame him."

"And Russel, poor, impracticable, is still living his romance," I added. "It is still glowing, the divine spark that makes up for everything."

"Not exactly," said Dussosoit. "When Tibbets left New York it was not alone. Mrs. Russel was with him. She said she couldn't stand washing any more dishes. It made her hands red."

Dussosoit laughed. I don't like his laugh. And the story was pointless anyway. No moral. Dussosoit's stories never do have a moral.

THE MAIDEN'S PRAYER

By F. T. Parker

THEY were two sweet specimens of girlhood conversing together earnestly and in low tones. I drew a trifle closer, charmed by the modulations of their voices, and eager to learn what thoughts were arising in such innocent minds. Were they pondering on the vagueness of the future, dwelling on its mysteries and promises? I moved nearer, but they spoke so low that I heard little; only two phrases repeated again and again became apparent to me:

"I sez to him," and "He sez to me."

GIFTS

By Douglas Ainslie

"YOU see Belinda glittering over there:
I gave the diamonds in her dark brown hair,
And I the ruby rings you see her wear—
Let not such largesse drive you to despair."
"Right O, Sir Isaac," Khaki youth replies—
"I gave the violet rings around her eyes."

FEW women genuinely want children. What they want is the esteem that goes with the appearance of wanting them.

"THE HONORARY PALL-BEARERS WERE—"

By S. N. Behrman

I

SUDDENLY Gresham became conscious that he was smiling. Something like panic overcame him. He compressed his lips tightly.

He should not have come. He should have refused to come. And yet what could he do? It had all happened so suddenly. And Mannerson had specifically asked for him.

As he stood stiffly waiting for the actual pall-bearers to carry Mannerson past him into the church, he caught a glimpse of several men with cameras on the curb, busily clicking away. From the corner of his eye he stole a glimpse of the bare-headed, frock-coated men beside him. Mannerson was one of the most powerful editors in the country, a man much feared and respected. Here, among the honorary pall-bearers, were men of light and learning; an ex-Secretary of State, a political boss, a publisher, old Danvers, sometime dramatic critic, who now spent his time writing endless volumes of theatrical reminiscence. . . . It was like Mannerson to have Danvers for a pall-bearer. Gresham could imagine Mannerson saying to himself.

"Yes, I'll have old Danvers there—he'll represent literature. . . !"

That was a slightly malicious thought. For he, Gresham, younger by twenty years than anyone of the chosen twelve, was there by Mannerson's forethought. Doubtless Mannerson had said: "Yes—I'll have Gresham. It'll help him to have his name mentioned with Ellison Sear's and Gregory Salter's and Mark Senner's and that crowd. . . ."

Doubtless Mannerson had thought that. Well, it was the end. This was Mannerson's last kindness. Gresham asked himself why he wasn't more grateful. Everything he had he owed to Mannerson. And he had wronged Mannerson . . . wronged him deeply. . . .

His eyes wandered to the mourners' carriages drawn up behind the hearse. At any rate Elsie had not come. She was too overcome, she had told them. That was wise of Elsie. That both of them should be present—that would have been too much. . . !

II

THE emotions which the preceding ceremonies had been unable to wake were stirred into being by Chopin's Funeral March nobly played by the organist. As the pall-bearers marched down the aisle the stately rhythms pealed through the great church, filling it. Yet, in spite of the music, perverse little thoughts flicked across Gresham's mind. In front of him walked Mark Senner. Senner was the Financial Editor of Mannerson's paper. He was a little, bent man, with a wizened face and a bushy moustache. It was well for Senner, Gresham reflected, that men had invented the funeral sinecure whose function he was now discharging. The work of literal pall-bearing would have crushed him. . . . So with most of these others for that matter. Old men!

The march down the aisle took an interminable time. As the slow seconds passed the swelling waves of the triumphal dirge produced a sort of hypnosis in Gresham. He felt himself moving in a lucid dream. . . . It had that kind of strangeness—like waking suddenly in the night to think of people

everywhere lying inert and prone in little, dark rooms. . . . What a curious scene! And he, Gresham, was taking part in it. He was an honorary pall-bearer! He felt himself again about to smile but, by an effort of the will, he managed to put all thought of the situation out of his mind. He listened to the music. That sobered him, calmed him. . . .

Finally Mannerson reached the altar, where he reposed. Gresham found himself in a front pew, between Senner and the ex-Secretary of State. The ex-Secretary was a large man, with a shiny bald head and a vast expanse of forehead. He remembered the time when the spectacle of an ex-Secretary of State would have awed him slightly. He even remembered the time when he had been afraid of Mannerson. . . . Most people were afraid of Mannerson. But from the first he had concealed his own timidity beneath a show of bravado that Mannerson had somehow liked. So Mannerson had helped him along, given him chances, put him on the broad road. But Gresham had always resented Mannerson—his power, his rudeness, his way of doling out favours. Even latterly, when he had basked in the sun of the "Chief's" favour, he had resented the radiations from the kindly luminary. He did not know fully why. It was a fact. Even, it had coloured his relations with Elsie.

He had resented deeply Mannerson's second marriage. It wasn't so much that he had been himself fond of Elsie; it was that Mannerson had married her as he dictated editorial policy, with a gallant ruthlessness, a suave disregard of anyone else as a possible rival for something he wanted. Gresham might be his friend, but he could never be his equal—that irked Gresham endlessly. Well, he had beaten Mannerson out at last. And Mannerson would be forever unaware. . . .

Somehow, as he dwelt on that thought, it was not altogether pleasing to him, it was not the sense of his own safety, but of Mannerson's inviolability that obtruded, irritatingly.

III

THE organ pealed out its massive threnody and came to a close, leaving the church full of after-sound which died away, too. Gresham was sorry. Now there would be a eulogy by someone with a thin voice. But the voice was not thin. It was unctuous, oleaginous. . . . Gresham was annoyed. . . . Why, he himself could say better things than that about Mannerson . . . "Rectitude!"—Rot! Mannerson would have been the last to take that high line about himself. Mannerson was a powerful man with big interests and he knew how to protect himself. No one could defend himself better than Mannerson, no one could attack better. And no one knew better than he whom to attack . . . "Public servant . . ." Rot again! He remembered Mannerson's privately uttered aphorism: "An editor's opinions must not rise above the intellectual level of his advertising man." No. Mannerson wasn't deceived about himself much. . . .

The voice droned on. Gresham thought that if he ever had a funeral like this—which was unlikely unless he changed mightily—he would have, instead of eulogistic inanities, a musical programme. That idea rather pleased Gresham. Suppose, instead of that babble, that they would just play something, something moving and noble. Great waves of sound rolling majestically through the church, furling the coffin. Nothing "got" you the way music did; it might divert even an honorary pall-bearer from the thought of his name in the morning paper. As it was, that was what Gresham chiefly thought of; he knew the list by heart:

"The Honorary Pall-Bearers are: Ellison Sears, Gregory Salter, Mark Senner, Frank Gresham. . . ."

IV

SUDDENLY Gresham found himself thinking of Mannerson, thinking of his burly, slightly bent figure as he would

come down the corridor by Gresham's office, walking very slowly, his shoulder brushing the wire-netting of the "morgue"—newspaper argot for the clipping files.

He had aged quickly within the year and he carried his head bent lower than ever and walked with his eyes fastened to the ground. Every night between five and six Gresham and the others would bring their stuff to him. Between half-past six and seven Gresham would hear the whirr of the bell in Mannerson's office summoning a boy to take the censored oracles to the composing-room. Then he would go to Mannerson.

Mannerson liked him to come in at this hour, to chat about things with him, while he smoked a cigar. After a time Mannerson would rise slowly and allow Gresham to help him on with his black, silk-lined overcoat. They would go down in the elevator together and, when he had no other engagements, Mannerson would take him uptown in his car. He seemed to like Gresham to dine with him and Elsie.

"I'm not as gay as I used to be," he said one night to Gresham.

By one of the capriccios of memory the scenes at the office and at Mannerson's home faded and he saw himself sitting with Mannerson on the verandah of his summer place on Long Island. Mannerson had been in his most charming mood, full of talk about people and places. He had told of his early years in New York, how he had studied law, graduated with a brilliant record but never practised.

"How does it happen you didn't stick to the law?" Gresham had asked, by way of manifesting an interest he didn't really feel.

He remembered how Mannerson laughed apologetically and waved his hand.

"I had the literary bee in my bonnet," he answered lightly. "I once wrote poems and things—as a young fellow will. . . ."

Mannerson had referred to this period as an aberration for which he was not to be taken to account and Gresham had forgotten the remark. It was somehow too grotesque for credence. Mannerson—writing poetry! Mannerson the hard-headed conservative, Mannerson the unsentimental, the red-blooded and well-hated, "the hoarse voice of the vested interests," as the radical press called him.

But now, mysteriously, it was this remark which came suddenly out of the sub-cellars of Gresham's consciousness and glowed luminously in his mind. Mannerson had been young once! Somehow he, like everyone else, always thought of Mannerson as old, settled, a symbol of changeless stratification. But it seemed this wasn't true! Mannerson wasn't born with Draconian opinions—he had solidified. . . .

Gresham lifted his eyes to the heavy bronze coffin lying at the altar. Yes, that was Mannerson! But where was the other Mannerson? The Mannerson who had written poems "as a young fellow will." What had become of him? For the matter of that, what had become of himself, Gresham? He had not been slow himself about fitting in with the stream. But somehow he had always felt his own case different. As long as one kept conscious of the essential hollowness of one's professions, as long as one looked at the whole thing as a game—as you call pieces of wood kings and queens in chess—as long as in the centre of the soul one kept outside, looking on—one might remain living, sensitive, free from ossification. But how did he know that Mannerson wasn't like that, really? That was absurd. But how did he know that he wouldn't become like Mannerson—a sort of intellectual and emotional mausoleum? He recalled with a start that the sight of his name in the papers that morning in the company of men with national reputations had given him a certain thrill . . . !

It was happening already and he was only forty-three! It had happened! Already he was able to take pride in that most vacant of terrestrial distinctions: Honorary Pall-Bearer. . .

V

GRESHAM looked about him miserably. . . . The preacher's words clanked upon his ears: "The management of a great newspaper entails the highest qualities of the mind and of the heart. . . ." The speaker paused impressively before disclosing what these qualities were; in the interval Gresham, who had once "covered" big funerals, wondered which of four or five stock qualities the man would mention first, "ability to feel the pulse of public opinion" or "great executive talent." The preacher chose the latter but followed immediately with the former.

"Poor Mannerson," said Gresham to himself, forgetting for the moment that Mannerson was no longer sentient. . . Mannerson had always so completely detested bores, especially sanctimonious ones.

Gresham lost himself again in thought of Mannerson. So he had written poetry once! It occurred to Gresham that if it were up to him to deliver the eulogy he would get up and say:

"Old Mannerson was a good business man and built up one of the biggest advertising mediums in the country. You all know that. But there's something you don't know. Old Mannerson was young once. And, while Old Mannerson was young, he wrote poetry. It's true. He told me so himself. It was one July day, after a heavy lunch, when he was off his guard. I know it's hard to believe, but he did it. He wrote poetry. He sat in a room and toiled over words—Mannerson did. He made patterns of words, he tried to put them together so they would sound well and be beautiful. Sometimes he'd make rather a neat combination and he'd get a thrill—old Mannerson would. Being a poet he used words like rose and love and desire and pain. All young poets use words like that. Also he loved Shelley. I know it's hard to swallow that, but he must have because all young poets do. And he must have known by heart the Ode on a Grecian Urn. He must have loved the lines:

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

"He must have said those lines over and over to himself at night and thought of some girl and wished he could make up lines like that about her.

"But Mannerson gave up poetry. He married a girl who had enough money to buy a small paper with and in time Mannerson made it a big paper. But, of course, all that's comparatively unimportant, like his death. The important thing I've just told you, that he was young once and loved beautiful words and spent time putting 'em together for no reason at all."

That was the speech that Gresham, sitting in a front-pew at Mannerson's funeral, made up about Mannerson. Gresham liked the speech; he thought it would be a fine thing if he could get up there behind Mannerson and say it. There would be a lot of fun in that. It was really too bad that there was no possibility of that speech ever being delivered before this particular audience. What fun it would be to watch the ex-Secretary of State while he said it! What fun it would be to watch Senner's face while he referred to Mannerson's newspaper as comparatively unimportant! Senner thought that the world waited for his editorials to appear before it did anything. And—oh, yes—he would add this to the speech—a suggestion for an epitaph:

"And now, since I've told you the finest and the most important thing about Mannerson, let me respectfully suggest the following epitaph—Mannerson's own words, said to me lightly, with half-indulgent shame, that summer's day. Let these words be graven on his tombstone:

"*I wrote poetry once—as young fellows will. . . !*"

That would be all. Gresham would stop the speech right there.

VI

IT pleased Gresham to toy with this speculative oration. It pleased him to

imagine himself delivering it, standing up there where the professional eulogist was now standing. What a delightful orgy it would be to deliver a speech like that! Gresham found himself inwardly chuckling. He actually repeated sentences from the speech over and over again in his mind, transposing words here and there to improve the effect. It would be worth nearly all it would cost to deliver a speech like that. . . !

And now the preacher was quoting the inevitable passage from "Julius Cæsar" about the elements being mixed in him. That wasn't true, reflected Gresham icily. The elements were not mixed in Mannerson. He was singularly homogeneous. . . . And yet there was Mannerson, in his mind's eye, sitting in a wicker-chair which his huge bulk distended, dressed in white flannels, waving his pudgy hand apologetically and saying:

"I had the literary bee. I wrote poetry once—as young fellows will."

And that was why Mannerson had given up the law! Gresham was angry at himself. Why had he allowed this confession to pass over him lightly as though it were without significance? Why hadn't he talked poetry to Mannerson? Why hadn't he asked him if he used to read Shelley, the glorious revolutionary? . . . Of course Mannerson would not have told him. And he had probably forgotten. . . . Poor Mannerson!

VII

WHAT happens to honorary pall-bearers after the public ceremonies of a funeral is one of the minor mysteries of modern life. They rarely follow their vicarious charge beyond the church; their attendance ceases with the reporters' and the photographers'. At any rate Gresham, when Mannerson's motor had moved up the avenue, took advantage of the crowd to edge his way around the corner of the church and make his escape through a side-street. When he got clear of the crowd he almost ran. In Forty-second Street he went into a hotel for a drink.

The bartender, an old friend, looked at him curiously.

"Been to the old man's funeral, I see."

Gresham became conscious of his mortuary garments.

"Oh, yes," he said.

"Much of a crowd?" asked the bartender.

"Big," answered Gresham. He gulped his drink and fled.

On the sidewalk he looked at his watch. It was nearly three—time to go back to the office.

"But I've got to get off these clothes," he muttered.

He took a taxi to his rooms and, by dint of much haste, managed to reach his office within a half-hour. As he entered the great building he felt something strange about it, as though it had lost part of its personality.

On the top-story, on the way to his own office, he passed Senner. Senner had also changed his clothes and was fumbling hurriedly to get his key into the lock.

Once inside his cosy, familiar room, Gresham felt better. He took off his coat, switched on the desk-lamp and sat down. There was an editorial to write against a bill whose passage was inevitable and another denouncing a candidate for office whose election was assured.

Gresham worked hard, writing furiously. He was anxious to get through with this; to go outside again. He stole a look through the window. It had become suddenly dark; a fine drizzle was falling. He looked over the endless expanse of roofs, roofs of theatres, grotesquely chimneyed, monotonous brownstone tenements, hotels. The spectacle made Gresham curiously happy; it was good to be alive in all this. . . .

As he worked, he thought of Mannerson. He thought of his empty office down the hall, with its massive desks and solid book-cases full of heavy works—on International Relations and Railroads and Economics. No poetry in Mannerson's room . . . ! Gresham

thought it strange that the accidentally remembered remark should have left such an impression on him.

When he had finished his work he brought it in to Senner. As the oldest man on the staff next to Mannerson, Senner had taken temporary charge. Then Gresham went back to his office to get his hat and coat.

He lit a cigarette and stood for a moment by the window looking out over the crenellated outline of the roofs. Who would succeed Mannerson? Senner was the oldest; there were three other men who had been on the paper longer than he, but Gresham felt that there was a good chance that Mannerson had singled him out for the leadership. Gresham was young and not too young. It was quite possible that Mannerson—

His telephone rang. Annoyed at the interruption of his pleasant dreaming he answered it.

"Who?" he asked sharply. But his voice softened instantly. "Oh! Mrs. Mannerson's maid? . . . Yes. How is she? Of course. I'll be right up. . . . If she's well enough to see me. . . . Very well, then. . . ."

He hung up the receiver and sat still a moment till he finished his cigarette. Then he rose, lit another cigarette, put on his coat, took his hat and stick and switched off the light.

Half way down the corridor he stopped. A curious desire had struck him to look into Mannerson's room. It seemed silly and he walked on. But the wish persisted. Smiling at the childishness of his action he turned and walked back till he stopped in front of Mannerson's door. It was locked—naturally. . . .

He called a boy.

"Get Jim to open Mr. Mannerson's door for me," he said.

At last he got in. The great, square room was exactly as it had always been, just as Mannerson had left it. Gresham walked by the secretary's desk to Mannerson's. With a half-guilty look at the closed door he sat down in Mannerson's comfortable chair.

He switched on the desk light. Everything was arranged neatly, press-despatches of a few days before, unanswered correspondence, brown manila envelopes marked "News—Rush." Idly Gresham pulled at a drawer. It opened. Gresham looked inside. A little book, in a black leather cover, caught his eye. He picked it up.

It was a book of poems . . . ! So Mannerson still nibbled occasionally—in secret. . . .

Gresham opened to a page at random. He read the first two lines that caught his eye. They were:

Come no profane insatiate mortal near
With the contagion of his passionate ills. . . .

Gresham read no more. He closed the book quickly and put it back. He sat still a minute looking beyond the penumbra of light into the darkness. Then he turned off the switch, rose and went out. . . .

VIII

A FEW minutes later he rang the bell of Mannerson's house. He was admitted. The girl asked him to go upstairs as Mrs. Mannerson was too ill to come down. Gresham went up. . . . Outside her door he paused, hesitant. But he went in. Elsie was lying on a sofa, propped up against some pillows. Their eyes met. He closed the door.

HANDSOME MEN

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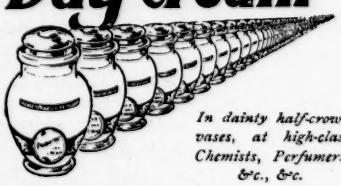

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ABOUT FASHIONS AND OTHER THINGS

By Various Hands

The secret is out at last! For many weeks the ateliers of Paris have been hard at work behind closed doors trying to solve the dress question, and after long waiting and much suspense the favoured amongst us are allowed just a tiny glimpse into the future. Some of the bolder creators of fashion are advocating rather accentuated panniers that strike terror into the hearts of those who go in constant fear of the crinoline. But there is no real cause for alarm. Extreme models always make their appearance with every change in the sartorial world, but seldom go further than the stage, where they are at their best. The line that is likely to be accepted by the majority certainly has a good deal of fullness over the hips, and is plain back and front. The long straight bodice still holds good, but the fullness on either side gives the impression of a natural waist-line. Skirts remain the same length, and are not likely to get any longer during the winter, except perhaps in the case of dinner frocks and essentially indoor dresses. Coats are longer than before, and reach to within a very few inches of the hem. These are still loosely belted, but from the waist downwards have either flat flounces or gathers on either side. Collars are still very wide, and terminate in a long revers that reaches to the waist. A very charming coat and skirt has just been made for Scotland by one of our leading *couturières*, and is of "British Warm" khaki and rough tweed. The skirt is entirely of the latter. The coat of British Warm is very long and loose, and would be quite straight were it not for the belt. It is lined with the tweed, and has a large shawl collar and cuffs of the same. A cosy little khaki hat of soft felt trimmed with small dark red feathers laid singly around the crown completes this very practical costume.

It is a little early to talk of fur. All the same, nearly all the autumn models have a touch of it. Last year most of us fell victims to the charm of nutria; but this year our affections seem likely to be centred on moufflonne fur—a thing we have seldom, if ever, met before. It is rather long and very soft and dark grey. Some say they think it is a kind of dyed goat, but that is a secret that remains locked in the breast of the furrier. Suffice it to say that it is very charming and should be very becoming to most of us. Those who possess grey fox furs may count themselves lucky, for they will be absolutely "IT." Nothing looks so well as this dark grey fur with that delightful rust colour that has grown so popular this year, and one of the most fascinating of the new coats and skirts was made of this. The skirt was rather plain and narrow at the foot. The coat, as usual, was long, but it had a series of deep tucks placed at each side from the waist downwards, one above the other, starting from beneath the ubiquitous loose girdle. The bodice was perfectly straight and loose. The deep draped collar, large cuffs, and hem of the coat were all outlined with moufflonne fur, and with it was worn a small draped hat of rich rust-coloured velours, turned up with a little brim of grey cloth.

Gone are the days of jumpers and fringe; that is to say, the days for *buying* such things are past and over, for they are to be seen everywhere, and once that happens they are no longer for the élite.

Cloaks, too, are not expected to reign for very long. If you are lucky enough to have one already, wear it, as there is nothing nicer, but do not make the mistake of buying one now. The coming of winter will probably see the last of them—for a time, at any rate. They may reappear in the spring, but it is a case of *qui vivra verra*. So my advice is, if you have one, wear it *now;* but if you are contemplating buying one, take Mr. Punch's advice and "don't!" When all is said and done, they are very draughty and somewhat chilly things when autumn winds begin to blow.

A curious little touch that is worthy of note is the slight suspicion of organdi muslin that finds its way into everything: a heavy velveteen frock will have a surprising little frill of organdie peeping out somewhere. There

The Ideal Beauty.

What it is, and How to Possess it.

By "ESTELLE."

DO you know what it is like to read a novel—one that begins with a heroine whose charms are not enumerated, but whose personality and environment seem to have some resemblance to your own? And then, on page four or five, to find something of this sort: "Her (the heroine's) hair rippled in soft, shining waves round her delicately-tinted face. She had one of those peach-like skins that never seem to roughen or to burn. Her eyes were hidden at the moment under long silken lashes, but a dimple hovered at the corner of her red mouth, as she pulled a rose to pieces between her white hands"—and so on.

At this point, if you are analytic, you begin to compare this exquisite creature with yourself. With what results? To find that you are hopelessly at a disadvantage, and that you are lucky if you can find one point in your looks that can vie with her fictitious charms. The story loses half its interest; you are no longer identified with the heroine.

But has it ever occurred to you that with a little patience and perseverance, that flowery description, with one or two slight alterations, might be applied to YOU?

YOU CAN'T HELP YOUR FEATURES—BUT you can help your skin, your hair, your hands—and that is something. Look carefully at the description of your heroine. Nothing is said about her features, unless you count a dimple as a feature. Let us be systematic.

Her hair is described as "rippling in shining waves."

YOUR HAIR WOULD BE JUST AS PRETTY if you would shampoo your hair with stallax instead of that common soap or manufactured "wash," that you are ruining it with at present. If, owing to your unkind treatment, it is thin and inclined to split at the ends, you should try this simple home recipe. One package boranium, obtained from any chemist, mixed with ½ pint bay rum. Boranium possesses wonderful properties of renewing the strength, beauty, and natural colour of the hair. "Perhaps," you say; "this is all very well." Admitted that these preparations make the hair thick and glossy, how can anything but nature, or hot irons, produce "rippling waves"? Have you never heard of silmerine?

A little liquid silmerine applied on the hair before going to bed and brushed out in the morning, will transform your straight locks into the most bewitching tight curls or fascinating "kinks," according to the amount used and your individual tastes.

To return to our heroine. "How can I ever accomplish a peach-like skin," you ask in despair, "and having secured it, how render it impervious to roughness and sunburn? No, it is too much." Nevertheless, there is much **TRUTH IN OLD PROVERBS,** and when you so glibly quote "Beauty is but skin deep," do you realise that you are stating a solid, undeniable fact—one on which a whole philosophy of beauty has been based?

Below a skin that may be blotched, roughened, and discoloured, is a complexion as clear and as fresh as a little child's. But how remove the ugly outer layer, the pores of which are clogged with waste matter? The skin is a delicate fabric, and no force must be used. Mercolised wax, which contains oxygen, will, if applied like ordinary cold cream, invisibly absorb the ugly outer cuticle, leaving the lovely new skin in all its glory.

To protect this delicate skin from the devastating effects of wind and weather, bathe the face and neck with a little cleminite dissolved in water, which will form the lightest of films over the complexion, at the same time giving it the much-coveted "peach-like bloom."

As to the long silky lashes, a little mennaline rubbed into the roots of the lashes with the tips of the fingers before going to bed will work wonders. If your hands are not as white as you would wish, a little lemon juice will remove bad stains, and bicrolium jelly will take away all redness and chapping.

A week or two of this treatment will make that description applicable to you. If you sit and pull a rose to pieces, any critical observer will have time to notice charms in you which attract immediate attention, and which will bear the closest scrutiny.

is something very cheeky about it. Even a heavy coat and skirt was seen with a wide fold of it starting just below each side of the collar. This continued inside the revers till it reached the waist, where it was pulled out and tied in an artistic bow in front just over the waist-belt, rather after the style of a grandmother's bonnet-strings. It is a little incongruous, but at least has the charm of freshness. There is the usual autumn effort to revive high collars, but I do not think those who like the comfort of the open neck need take alarm. The tailor-made girl will wear her collars and ties as she always has done, and will look as charming as ever, but the girl who loves the freedom of an unfettered throat will not be led into paths of restriction. The wide effect still holds good for the filmy blouses and afternoon frocks.

Speaking of the former, the shops are now full of linette blouses, and these are well worth a description for the sake of those who do not live near the great cities and the haunts of men—or rather women! Linette gives the impression of being a cross between chiffon and cotton voile. It is very thin, and has all the soft grace of chiffon but all the splendid washing qualities of voile, and it is to be found in all sorts of delicate shades. White linette blouses, made with plenty of dainty lace, are the most delightful possessions, but a pretty *dessous* is a necessity. These glorified camisoles are one of the things of the moment, and endless ingenuity is spent over making them wonders of daintiness and charm, crêpe-de-chine, real filet lace, ribbons, and dainty floral trimming all being pressed into service.

THE HAT AND THE HAIR

Many women are finding that the constant wearing of uniform caps and other headgear, made necessary by war work, has had a bad effect on their hair, and where it has not actually made the hair fall out, it has made it either greasy or dull looking, and no amount of brushing seems to put life into it again. Don't waste time or money in "ready-made" tonics, which are like ready-made medicine, mostly quite unsuitable for the person who takes them. Your hair requires a doctor's skilled attention probably, and not the unintelligent rubbing in of hair dresser's' adjuncts, and you will be well advised by Mr. De Neuville, of 52, Brompton Road (opposite Gooch's), who, to the writer's personal knowledge, has worked wonders with several very stubborn and entirely different cases of hair trouble.

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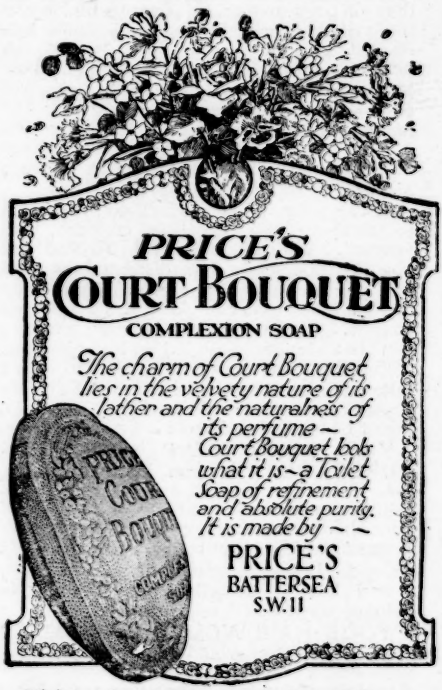
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